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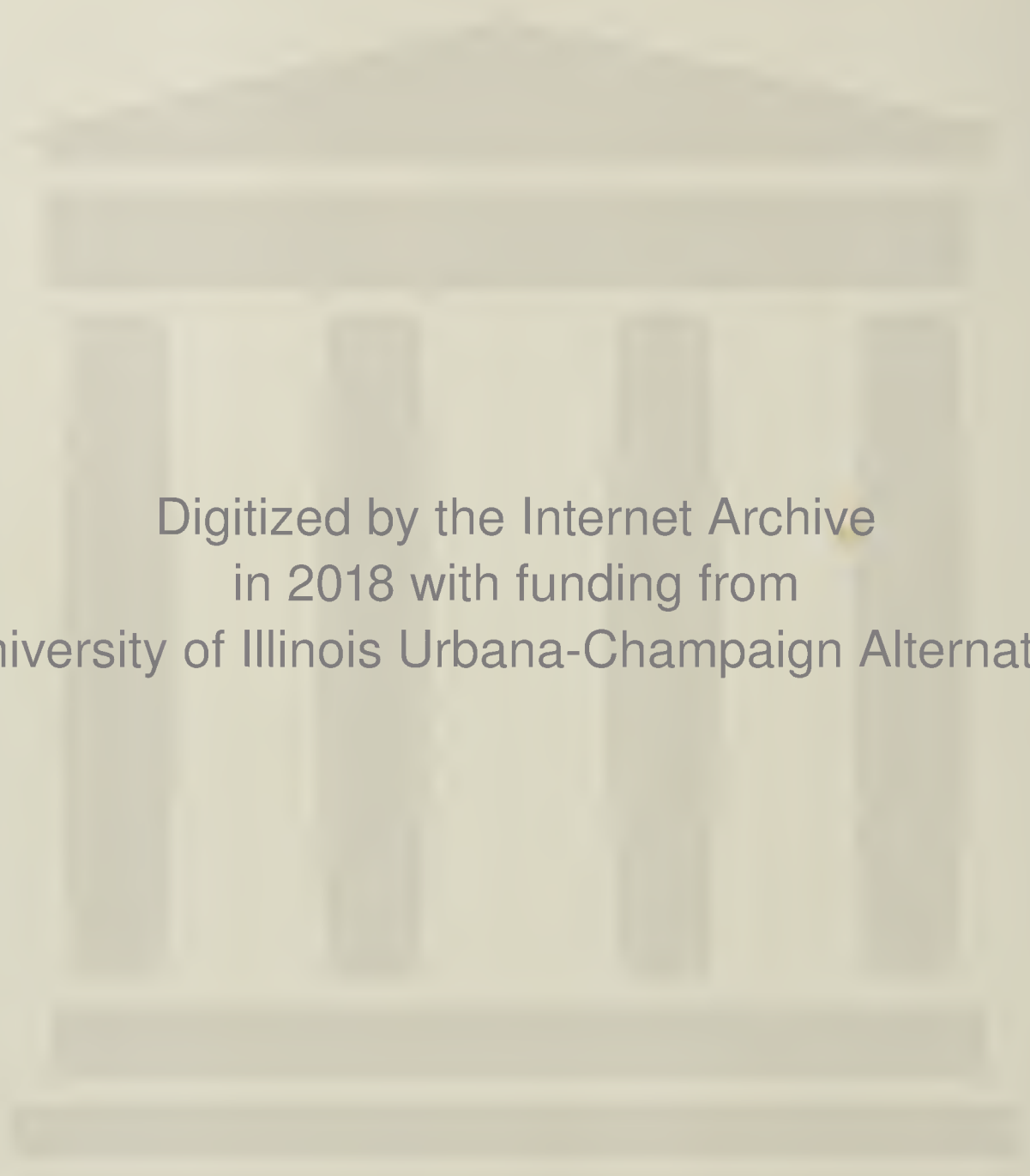
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ST. JOHN'S EVE

AND OTHER STORIES

From "Evenings at the Farm," and "St. Petersburg Stories"

BY

NIKOLAÏ VASILIEVITCH GOGOL

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

NEW YORK

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.

13 ASTOR PLACE

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INTRODUCTION.

“WHAT unheard-of thing is this? ‘*Evenings at a Farmhouse near Dikanka!*’¹ What sort of evenings are these? And some bee-farmer has sprung forth into prominence! Glory to God! have not geese enough already had courage to take to quills, and bring forth scrappy nonsense on paper? have not plenty of people of every calling, and even the rabble, already smeared their fingers with ink? And now the bee-farmer has been seized with a freak to follow the others! Truth to tell, there’s so much printed paper about, that you can’t very readily find things to wrap up in it.”

¹ Although but three of these selected tales belong to the famous series known as “*Evenings at a Farmhouse near Dikanka*” (which includes the sequel, “*Mirgorod*”), the *Introduction* is herewith given, for the proper understanding of the title as referred to in this volume, and in those which will succeed it.

My informant has heard these speeches, heard them a month ago! that is, I say, that, when our brother the farmer thrusts his nose out into the great world, then — good Heavens! — it's all the same how it comes about: sometimes you enter the chamber of a great lord; all surround you, and begin to make a fool of you (that would be nothing, if it were only the upper servants; no, it is some ragged little boy, see — a good-for-nothing, who lounges in the back yard, and there he'll stick), and they begin to stamp on all sides: "Where are you going? Where? Why? Get along, muzhik, step along!" — I will tell you — but why speak? It's a great deal easier for me to go twice a year to Mirgorod, where it's five years since either the district judge or the reverend priest has seen me, than show myself in that great world; but I have shown myself — weep, or not, but answer.

We, beloved readers, without wrath be it said (and perhaps you will be angry because a bee-farmer addresses you unceremoniously, as though you were his relative or his gossip), we at the farm have long held this practice: as

soon as the labors of the field are finished, the muzhik crawls upon his oven to spend the whole winter, and our brother hides his bees in a dark cellar; when you no longer behold a stork in the air, nor a pear upon the tree, then, as soon as evening falls, a little light is sure to be burning somewhere at the end of the street, laughter and songs are audible afar, the bala-laika¹ tinkles, and sometimes a fiddle; talking, uproar . . . This is our *vetchernitza*.² They, you will please to observe, resemble your balls; only it cannot be said that they are exactly alike. If you go to a ball, it is on purpose to twirl your feet, and yawn behind your hand; but with us a throng of girls assembles in one cottage, not for a ball, but with distaffs and hackling-combs. And at first they seem to busy themselves with their affairs; the distaffs whir, songs pour forth, and not a maiden raises her eye askance: but as soon as the boys dash down upon the cottage with the fiddler, a cry

¹ A sort of primitive guitar, with a long neck and a short, generally triangular, sounding-board, strung with two or three catgut cords, which are plucked with the fingers in playing.

² From *vetcher*, evening.

arises, pranks are concocted, dances begin, and such capers are indulged in as it is impossible to describe.

But the best of all is, when they crowd together in a dense cluster, and set to guessing riddles, or simply begin to chat. My Heavens, what don't they tell! What ancient things they exhume! What terrors they cause! But nowhere, probably, were such marvels related as at the evening gatherings at the house of the bee-farmer, Ruduii Panko.

Why the townsfolk call me *Ruduii Panko* (the red gentleman), by Heavens, I cannot tell! And my hair, it seems, is now more gray than red. But with us, one must not get angry, for such is the custom: if people confer a nickname on any one, it will stick to him for ever and ever. They used to assemble on the eve of a festal day, these good people, as guests at the bee-farmer's poor hut: they seated themselves about the table,—and then I would beg you only to listen to them. You would have said they were not at all of the common herd, not mere farm-laborers. . . . Yes, perhaps they would have done honor to some higher per-

son than a farmer by their visit. . . . Here, for instance, do you know the dyak of our Dikanka church, Thoma Grigorovitch? Eh, there's a head for you! What stories he could get off! You will find two of them in this little book. He never wore a motley dressing-gown, such as you find on many village sacristans; but, even if you caught him on ordinary days, he always received you in a smock of fine cloth, of the color of cold potato kisel,¹ for which he had paid about six rubles the arshin² in Poltava. None of us on all the farm could say of his shoes that they ever smelt of tar; but every one knows that he cleaned them with the very best suet, such as I think some peasants would put into their oatmeal porridge with joy. Neither can any one say that he ever wiped his nose on the skirts of his smock, as some persons of his profession do; but he took from his bosom a neatly folded handkerchief, embroidered on all the edges with red thread, and, after having put it to its proper use, he folded it up again, generally into the twelfth part of its first compass, and hid it again in his breast.

¹ Sourish, jelly-like porridge.

² Twenty-eight inches.

And one of the guests, — well, he was so much of a gentleman, that he might be dressed up on the spot as an assessor or an under mill-clerk. He used to hold his finger out before him, and, gazing at its tip, he would set out to tell a story, in an artistic, cunning way, just as things are in printed books. Sometimes you would listen, listen, and fall into a revery. You couldn't understand any thing, if you were killed for it. Where did he get such words? Thoma Grigorovitch once made up a capital fancy decoration to a story, as a hit at this. He told him that a student, who had learned reading and writing of a certain sacristan, came home to his father's house, and had got to be such a Latin scholar, that he had even forgotten our orthodox language: all the words twisted round on his tongue. He called *lopata* (a spade), *lopatus*; *baba* (a woman), *babus*. So once it came to pass that he and his father went into the fields together. The Latinist caught sight of a rake, and asked his father, "What do you call this, father?" and then, open-mouthed, he set his foot on the teeth. His father had not managed to answer him,

when the handle gave a flourish, rose up, and — bang it went on his forehead! “Confound the rake!” shrieked the scholar, clutching at his forehead, and jumping a whole arshin: “may the Evil One knock its father off the bridge! how painfully it strikes!” So there it was! the little dove remembered its name. Such a tale did not suit the taste of the inventive storyteller. He rose from his seat without a word, planted his feet wide apart in the middle of the room, inclined his head a little forward, thrust his hand into the hind-pocket of his pea-green coat, pulled out a round, lacquered snuff-box, tapped with his finger upon the painted phiz of some Mussulman general, and taking any thing but a small pinch of snuff, ground up from ashes and lovage-leaves, he raised it with a pump-handle motion to his nose, and stretched out his nose in passing at the whole heap, without even touching his thumb, and all without uttering a word: then he dived into another pocket, and pulled out a blue-checked cotton handkerchief; and then only did he growl something to himself, which sounded like the proverb, “*Cast not your pearls before swine.*”

“Now there will be a quarrel,” I thought, perceiving that Thoma Grigorovitch’s fingers were folding in preparation for an insulting sign. Fortunately, my old woman had the wit to set upon the table a hot *knish*,¹ with butter, and all set to work. Thoma Grigorovitch’s hand, instead of showing the sign, was stretched out towards the *knish*; and, as it always happens, they all began to praise the masterly housewife.

We had still another story-teller among us; but he (there’s no need of recalling him at night) dug up such frightful tales, that our hair stood straight up on our heads. I have deliberately refrained from placing any of them here: good people would be so scared, that, Heaven forgive them! they would take to fearing the bee-farmer like a fiend. It is better, therefore, if God grants me to live until the New Year, and to issue another little book, then perhaps I may frighten them with visitors from another world, and marvels such as were performed in our orthodox land in olden days. Among them, you will find, perhaps, some little tales by the bee-farmer himself, such as he related to his

¹ A cake baked with butter or grease.

grandchildren. If they are but read and listened to, I can collect ten such little books — only this confounded indolence overpowers me.

Yes, and I came near forgetting the most important thing of all ! when you come to see me, gentlemen, take the straight path by the post-road to Dikanka. I have placed it on the first leaf on purpose that you may reach our farm as speedily as possible. Of Dikanka, I think you have already heard enough.

It is sufficient to say that there is a house there cleaner than any bee-keeper's barrack. Of the garden, nothing can be said : in your Petersburg, you will not find such another, of a surety. On arriving at Dikanka, just ask the first small boy you meet in a dirty shirt, tending geese, "Where does Ruduii Panko, the bee-farmer, live?" — "Why, there!" he will say, pointing with his finger ; and, if you like, he will conduct you to the very farmhouse. But I beseech you not to put your arms behind you, and back-bite as the saying is ; for the roads to our farms are not so smooth as they are before our temples. Thoma Grigorovitch, when he came from Dikanka the year before last, made acquaintance

with a hole, in company with his brown mare and a new tarataika,¹ in spite of the fact that he was driving himself, and that he had temporarily placed over his own eyes some others which he had bought.

Moreover, when you come as my guest, we will give you such melons as you probably never ate since you were born ; and honey — I swear that you can find no better at any farm. Just imagine, when you fetch in a comb of honey, a perfume such as it is impossible to form any idea of wafts through all the room : it is translucent as a tear, or the precious crystal which people have in earrings. And what *piroggi* (patties) my old woman will feed you on ! If you only knew what patties they are ! sugar, perfect sugar ! and butter, so that it trickles over your lips when you begin to eat ! You will think rightly, what master-hands these women are ! Did you ever, gentlemen, drink pear kvas with thorn-tree haws ? or varenu² with raisins and cream ? Or did you ever chance to eat *putra*³ with milk ? My Heavens ! what

¹ A two-wheeled peasant wagon.

² Berry brandy, made of berries, brandy, honey, and spices.

³ A sort of soup, made of vegetables, groats, and milk.

dishes there are in this world! You begin to eat — you gorge yourself, and that's all there is about it: it's an inexpressible delight. Last year — But what nonsense am I chattering? Only come, come as soon as you possibly can; and we will feed you, so that you will tell the tale far and wide.

BEE-FARMER RUDUII PANKO.

NOTE. — Later on, the gentleman in the pea-green coat deserted this worshipful company. It came about in this wise: the question of pickling apples for winter use arose. The Ruduii Panko's "old woman" said that the apples should first be well washed, and then dipped in kvas. The pea-green Poltava man immediately said, "Nothing of the sort! First of all, they must be strewn with tansy, and then" — Now, no one had ever heard of tansy being used in that way, though currant-leaves, hawkweed, and trefoil were not uncommon, and no one understood such matters better than the old woman. The host, therefore, led the innovator quietly to one side, and besought him not to set people by the ears, even if he was a man of importance, who had dined once at the same table as the governor, and warned him that people would ridicule him if he said such things. The man, who carried his nose in the air because his uncle had been a commissary ("though, glory to God, there are official positions more elevated than even a commissary's!"), simply spit, and took himself off without a word, to the satisfaction of the company. — *Tr.*

ST. JOHN'S EVE.¹

RELATED BY THE SACRISTAN OF THE DIKANKA
CHURCH.

THOMA GRIGOROVITCH had a very strange sort of eccentricity: to the day of his death, he never liked to tell the same thing twice. There were times, when, if you asked him to relate a thing afresh, behold, he would interpolate new matter, or alter it so that it was impossible to recognize it. Once on a time, one of those gentlemen (it is hard for us simple people to put a name to them, to say whether they are scribblers, or not scribblers: but it is just the same thing as the usurers at our yearly fairs; they clutch and beg and steal every sort of frippery, and issue mean little volumes, no

¹ This is one of the stories from the celebrated volume entitled "Tales at a Farmhouse near Dikanka."

thicker than an A B C book, every month, or even every week), — one of these gentlemen wormed this same story out of Thoma Grigorovitch, and he completely forgot about it. But that same young gentleman in the pea-green caftan, whom I have mentioned, and one of whose Tales you have already read, I think, came from Poltava, bringing with him a little book, and, opening it in the middle, shows it to us. Thoma Grigorovitch was on the point of setting his spectacles astride of his nose, but recollected that he had forgotten to wind thread about them, and stick them together with wax, so he passed it over to me. As I understand something about reading and writing, and do not wear spectacles, I undertook to read it. I had not turned two leaves, when all at once he caught me by the hand, and stopped me.

“Stop! tell me first what you are reading.”

I confess that I was a trifle stunned by such a question.

“What! what am I reading, Thoma Grigorovitch? These were your very words.”

“Who told you that they were my words?”

“Why, what more would you have? Here it is printed: *Related by such and such a sacristan.*”

“Spit on the head of the man who printed that! he lies, the dog of a Moscow pedler! Did I say that? *'Twas just the same as though one hadn't his wits about him!* Listen. I'll tell it to you on the spot.”

We moved up to the table, and he began.

My grandfather (the kingdom of heaven be his! may he eat only wheaten rolls and *makovniki*¹ with honey in the other world!) could tell a story wonderfully well. When he used to begin on a tale, you wouldn't stir from the spot all day, but keep on listening. He was no match for the story-teller of the present day, when he begins to lie, with a tongue as though he had had nothing to eat for three days, so that you snatch your cap, and flee from the house. As I now recall it,—my old mother was alive then,—in the long winter evenings when the frost was crackling out of doors, and

¹ Poppy-seeds cooked in honey, and dried in square cakes.

had so sealed up hermetically the narrow panes of our cottage, she used to sit before the hackling-comb, drawing out a long thread in her hand, rocking the cradle with her foot, and humming a song, which I seem to hear even now.

The fat-lamp quivering and flaring up as though in fear of something, lighted us within our cottage; the spindle hummed; and all of us children, collected in a cluster, listened to grandfather, who had not crawled off the oven for more than five years, owing to his great age. But the wondrous tales of the incursions of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Poles, the bold deeds of Podkova, of Poltor-Kozhukh, and Sagaidatchnii, did not interest us so much as the stories about some deed of eld which always sent a shiver through our frames, and made our hair rise upright on our heads. Sometimes such terror took possession of us in consequence of them, that, from that evening on, Heaven knows what a marvel every thing seemed to us. If you chance to go out of the cottage after nightfall for any thing, you imagine that a visitor from the other world has lain

down to sleep in your bed ; and I should not be able to tell this a second time were it not that I had often taken my own smock, at a distance, as it lay at the head of the bed, for the Evil One rolled up in a ball ! But the chief thing about grandfather's stories was, that he never had lied in all his life ; and whatever he said was so, was so.

I will now relate to you one of his marvellous tales. I know that there are a great many wise people who copy in the courts, and can even read civil documents, who, if you were to put into their hand a simple prayer-book, could not make out the first letter in it, and would show all their teeth in derision — which is wisdom. These people laugh at every thing you tell them. Such incredulity has spread abroad in the world ! What then ? (Why, may God and the Holy Virgin cease to love me if it is not possible that even you will not believe me !) Once he said something about witches ; . . . What then ? Along comes one of these head-breakers, — and doesn't believe in witches ! Yes, glory to God that I have lived so long in the world ! I have seen heretics, to whom it

would be easier to lie in confession than it would to our brothers and equals to take snuff, and those people would deny the existence of witches! But let them just dream about something, and they won't even tell what it was! There's no use in talking about them!

ST. JOHN'S EVE.

No one could have recognized this village of ours a little over a hundred years ago : a hamlet it was, the poorest kind of a hamlet. Half a score of miserable izbás, unplastered, badly thatched, were scattered here and there about the fields. There was not an enclosure or a decent shed to shelter animals or wagons. That was the way the wealthy lived : and if you had looked for our brothers, the poor, — why, a hole in the ground, — that was a cabin for you ! Only by the smoke could you tell that a God-created man lived there. You ask why they lived so ? It was not entirely through poverty : almost every one led a wandering, Cossack life, and gathered not a little plunder in foreign lands ; it was rather because there was no reason for setting up a well-ordered *khata* (wooden house). How many people were wandering

all over the country, — Crimeans, Poles, Lithuanians ! It was quite possible that their own countrymen might make a descent, and plunder every thing. Any thing was possible.

In this hamlet a man, or rather a devil in human form, often made his appearance. Why he came, and whence, no one knew. He prowled about, got drunk, and suddenly disappeared as if into the air, and there was not a hint of his existence. Then, again, behold, and he seemed to have dropped from the sky, and went flying about the street of the village, of which no trace now remains, and which was not more than a hundred paces from Dikanka. He would collect together all the Cossacks he met ; then there were songs, laughter, money in abundance, and vodka flowed like water. . . . He would address the pretty girls, and give them ribbons, earrings, strings of beads, — more than they knew what to do with. It is true that the pretty girls rather hesitated about accepting his presents : God knows, perhaps they had passed through unclean hands. My grandfather's aunt, who kept a tavern at that time, in which Basavriuk (as they called that

devil-man) often had his carouses, said that no consideration on the face of the earth would have induced her to accept a gift from him. And then, again, how avoid accepting? Fear seized on every one when he knit his bristly brows, and gave a sidelong glance which might send your feet, God knows whither: but if you accept, then the next night some fiend from the swamp, with horns on his head, comes to call, and begins to squeeze your neck, when there is a string of beads upon it; or bite your finger, if there is a ring upon it; or drag you by the hair, if ribbons are braided in it. God have mercy, then, on those who owned such gifts! But here was the difficulty: it was impossible to get rid of them; if you threw them into the water, the diabolical ring or necklace would skim along the surface, and into your hand.

There was a church in the village, — St. Pantelei, if I remember rightly. There lived there a priest, Father Athanasii of blessed memory. Observing that Basavriuk did not come to church, even on Easter, he determined to reprove him, and impose penance upon him. Well, he hardly escaped with his life. “Hark

ye, pannótche '!" he thundered in reply, "learn to mind your own business instead of meddling in other people's, if you don't want that goat's throat of yours stuck together with boiling kutya."² What was to be done with this unrepentant man? Father Athanasii contented himself with announcing that any one who should make the acquaintance of Basavriuk would be counted a Catholic, an enemy of Christ's church, not a member of the human race.

In this village there was a Cossack named Korzh, who had a laborer whom people called Peter the Orphan — perhaps because no one remembered either his father or mother. The church starost, it is true, said that they had died of the pest in his second year; but my grandfather's aunt would not hear to that, and tried with all her might to furnish him with parents, although poor Peter needed them about as much as we need last year's snow. She said that his father had been in Zaporozhe,

¹ Sir.

² A dish of rice or wheat flour, with honey and raisins, which is brought to the church on the celebration of memorial masses.

taken prisoner by the Turks, underwent God only knows what tortures, and having, by some miracle, disguised himself as a eunuch, had made his escape. Little cared the black-browed youths and maidens about his parents. They merely remarked, that if he only had a new coat, a red sash, a black lambskin cap, with dandified blue crown, on his head, a Turkish sabre hanging by his side, a whip in one hand and a pipe with handsome mountings in the other, he would surpass all the young men. But the pity was, that the only thing poor Peter had was a gray *svitka* with more holes in it than there are gold pieces in a Jew's pocket. And that was not the worst of it, but this : that Korzh had a daughter, such a beauty as I think you can hardly have chanced to see. My deceased grandfather's aunt used to say — and you know that it is easier for a woman to kiss the Evil One than to call anybody a beauty, without malice be it said — that this Cossack maiden's cheeks were as plump and fresh as the pinkest poppy when just bathed in God's dew, and, glowing, it unfolds its petals, and coquets with the rising sun ; that her brows

were like black cords, such as our maidens buy nowadays, for their crosses and ducats, of the Moscow pedlers who visit the villages with their baskets, and evenly arched as though peeping into her clear eyes; that her little mouth, at sight of which the youths smacked their lips, seemed made to emit the songs of nightingales; that her hair, black as the raven's wing, and soft as young flax (our maidens did not then plait their hair in clubs interwoven with pretty, bright-hued ribbons), fell in curls over her kuntush.¹ Eh! may I never intone another alleluia in the choir, if I would not have kissed her, in spite of the gray which is making its way all through the old wool which covers my pate, and my old woman beside me, like a thorn in my side! Well, you know what happens when young men and maids live side by side. In the twilight the heels of red boots were always visible in the place where Pidórka chatted with her Petrus. But Korzh would never have suspected any thing out of the way, only one day — it is evident that none but the Evil One could have inspired

¹ Upper garment in Little Russia.

him — Petrus took it into his head to kiss the Cossack maiden's rosy lips with all his heart in the passage, without first looking well about him ; and that same Evil One — may the son of a dog dream of the holy cross ! — caused the old graybeard, like a fool, to open the cottage-door at that same moment. Korzh was petrified, dropped his jaw, and clutched at the door for support. Those unlucky kisses had completely stunned him. It surprised him more than the blow of a pestle on the wall, with which, in our days, the muzhik generally drives out his intoxication for lack of fusees and powder.

Recovering himself, he took his grandfather's hunting-whip from the wall, and was about to belabor Peter's back with it, when Pidórka's little six-year-old brother Ivas rushed up from somewhere or other, and, grasping his father's legs with his little hands, screamed out, "Daddy, daddy ! don't beat Petrus !" What was to be done ? A father's heart is not made of stone. Hanging the whip again upon the wall, he led him quietly from the house. "If you ever show yourself in my cottage again,

or even under the windows, look out, Petró! by Heaven, your black mustache will disappear; and your black locks, though wound twice about your ears, will take leave of your pate, or my name is not Terentiy Korzh." So saying, he gave him a little taste of his fist in the nape of his neck, so that all grew dark before Petrus, and he flew headlong. So there was an end of their kissing. Sorrow seized upon our doves; and a rumor was rife in the village, that a certain Pole, all embroidered with gold, with mustaches, sabre, spurs, and pockets jingling like the bells of the bag with which our sacristan Taras goes through the church every day, had begun to frequent Korzh's house. Now, it is well known why the father is visited when there is a black-browed daughter about. So, one day, Pidórka burst into tears, and clutched the hand of her Ivas. "Ivas, my dear! Ivas, my love! fly to Petrus, my child of gold, like an arrow from a bow. Tell him all: I would have loved his brown eyes, I would have kissed his white face, but my fate decrees not so. More than one towel have I wet with burning tears. I am sad, I am heavy at heart. And

my own father is my enemy. I will not marry that Pole, whom I do not love. Tell him they are preparing a wedding, but there will be no music at our wedding: ecclesiastics will sing instead of pipes and kobzas.¹ I shall not dance with my bridegroom: they will carry me out. Dark, dark will be my dwelling, — of maple wood; and, instead of chimneys, a cross will stand upon the roof.”

Petró stood petrified, without moving from the spot, when the innocent child lisped out Pidórka's words to him. “And I, unhappy man, thought to go to the Crimea and Turkey, win gold and return to thee, my beauty! But it may not be. The evil eye has seen us. I will have a wedding, too, dear little fish, I too; but no ecclesiastics will be at that wedding. The black crow will caw, instead of the pope, over me; the smooth field will be my dwelling; the dark blue clouds my roof-tree. The eagle will claw out my brown eyes: the rain will wash the Cossack's bones, and the whirlwinds will dry them. But what am I? Of whom, to whom, am I complaining? 'Tis plain, God

¹ Eight-stringed musical instrument.

willed it so. If I am to be lost, then so be it!" and he went straight to the tavern.

My late grandfather's aunt was somewhat surprised on seeing Petrus in the tavern, and at an hour when good men go to morning mass; and she stared at him as though in a dream, when he demanded a jug of brandy, about half a pailful. But the poor fellow tried in vain to drown his woe. The vodka stung his tongue like nettles, and tasted more bitter than wormwood. He flung the jug from him upon the ground. "You have sorrowed enough, Cossack," growled a bass voice behind him. He looked round — Basavriuk! Ugh, what a face! His hair was like a brush, his eyes like those of a bull. "I know what you lack: here it is." Then he jingled a leather purse which hung from his girdle, and smiled diabolically. Petró shuddered. "He, he, he! yes, how it shines!" he roared, shaking out ducats into his hand: "he, he, he! and how it jingles! And I only ask one thing for a whole pile of such shiners." — "It is the Evil One!" exclaimed Petró: — "Give them here! I'm ready for any thing!" They struck hands upon it.

“See here, Petró, you are ripe just in time: to-morrow is St. John the Baptist’s day. Only on this one night in the year does the fern blossom. Delay not. I will await thee at midnight in the Bear’s ravine.”

I do not believe that chickens await the hour when the woman brings their corn, with as much anxiety as Petrus awaited the evening. And, in fact, he looked to see whether the shadows of the trees were not lengthening, if the sun were not turning red towards setting; and, the longer he watched, the more impatient he grew. How long it was! Evidently, God’s day had lost its end somewhere. And now the sun is gone. The sky is red only on one side, and it is already growing dark. It grows colder in the fields. It gets dusky, and more dusky, and at last quite dark. At last! With heart almost bursting from his bosom, he set out on his way, and cautiously descended through the dense woods into the deep hollow called the Bear’s ravine. Basavriuk was already waiting there. It was so dark, that you could not see a yard before you. Hand in hand they penetrated the thin marsh, clinging to the luxuriant

thorn-bushes, and stumbling at almost every step. At last they reached an open spot. Petró looked about him : he had never chanced to come there before. Here Basavriuk halted.

“Do you see, before you stand three hillocks? There are a great many sorts of flowers upon them. But may some power keep you from plucking even one of them. But as soon as the fern blossoms, seize it, and look not round, no matter what may seem to be going on behind thee.”

Petró wanted to ask — and behold, he was no longer there. He approached the three hillocks —where were the flowers? He saw nothing. The wild steppe-grass darkled around, and stifled every thing in its luxuriance. But the lightning flashed ; and before him stood a whole bed of flowers, all wonderful, all strange : and there were also the simple fronds of fern. Petró doubted his senses, and stood thoughtfully before them, with both hands upon his sides.

“What prodigy is this? one can see these weeds ten times in a day : what marvel is there about them? was not devil's-face laughing at me?”

Behold! the tiny flower-bud crimsons, and moves as though alive. It is a marvel, in truth. It moves, and grows larger and larger, and flushes like a burning coal. The tiny star flashes up, something bursts softly, and the flower opens before his eyes like a flame, lighting the others about it. "Now is the time," thought *Petró*, and extended his hand. He sees hundreds of shaggy hands reach from behind him, also for the flower; and there is a running about from place to place, in the rear. He half shut his eyes, plucked sharply at the stalk, and the flower remained in his hand. All became still. Upon a stump sat *Basavriuk*, all blue like a corpse. He moved not so much as a finger. His eyes were immovably fixed on something visible to him alone: his mouth was half open and speechless. All about, nothing stirred. Ugh! it was horrible!—But then a whistle was heard, which made *Petró's* heart grow cold within him; and it seemed to him that the grass whispered, and the flowers began to talk among themselves in delicate voices, like little silver bells; the trees rustled in waving contention;—*Basavriuk's* face suddenly became

full of life, and his eyes sparkled. "The witch has just returned," he muttered between his teeth. "See here, *Petró*: a beauty will stand before you in a moment; do whatever she commands; if not—you are lost forever." Then he parted the thorn-bush with a knotty stick, and before him stood a tiny *izbá*, on chicken's legs, as they say. *Basavriuk* smote it with his fist, and the wall trembled. A large black dog ran out to meet them, and with a whine, transforming itself into a cat, flew straight at his eyes. "Don't be angry, don't be angry, you old Satan!" said *Basavriuk*, employing such words as would have made a good man stop his ears. Behold, instead of a cat, an old woman with a face wrinkled like a baked apple, and all bent into a bow: her nose and chin were like a pair of nut-crackers. "A stunning beauty!" thought *Petró*; and cold chills ran down his back. The witch tore the flower from his hand, bent over, and muttered over it for a long time, sprinkling it with some kind of water. Sparks flew from her mouth, froth appeared on her lips.

"Throw it away," she said, giving it back to *Petró*.

Petró threw it, and what wonder was this? the flower did not fall straight to the earth, but for a long while twinkled like a fiery ball through the darkness, and swam through the air like a boat: at last it began to sink lower and lower, and fell so far away, that the little star, hardly larger than a poppy-seed, was barely visible. "Here!" croaked the old woman, in a dull voice: and Basavriuk, giving him a spade, said, "Dig here, Petró: here you will see more gold than you or Korzh ever dreamed of."

Petró spat on his hands, seized the spade, applied his foot, and turned up the earth, a second, a third, a fourth time. . . . There was something hard: the spade clinked, and would go no farther. Then his eyes began to distinguish a small, iron-bound coffer. He tried to seize it; but the chest began to sink into the earth, deeper, farther, and deeper still: and behind him he heard a laugh, more like a serpent's hiss. "No, you shall not see the gold until you procure human blood," said the witch, and led up to him a child of six, covered with a white sheet, indicating by a sign that he was to cut off his head. Petró was stunned. A

trifle, indeed, to cut off a man's, or even an innocent child's, head for no reason whatever! In wrath he tore off the sheet enveloping his head, and behold! before him stood Ivas. And the poor child crossed his little hands, and hung his head. . . . Petró flew upon the witch with the knife like a madman, and was on the point of laying hands on her. . . .

“What did you promise for the girl?” . . . thundered Basavriuk; and like a shot he was on his back. The witch stamped her foot: a blue flame flashed from the earth; it illumined it all inside, and it was as if moulded of crystal; and all that was within the earth became visible, as if in the palm of the hand. Ducats, precious stones in chests and kettles, were piled in heaps beneath the very spot they stood on. His eyes burned, . . . his mind grew troubled. . . . He grasped the knife like a madman, and the innocent blood spurted into his eyes. Diabolical laughter resounded on all sides. Misshaped monsters flew past him in herds. The witch, fastening her hands in the headless trunk, like a wolf, drank its blood. . . . All went round in his head. Collecting all his

strength, he set out to run. Every thing turned red before him. The trees seemed steeped in blood, and burned and groaned. The sky glowed and glowered. . . . Burning points, like lightning, flickered before his eyes. Utterly exhausted, he rushed into his miserable hovel, and fell to the ground like a log. A death-like sleep overpowered him.

Two days and two nights did Petró sleep, without once awakening. When he came to himself, on the third day, he looked long at all the corners of his hut; but in vain did he endeavor to recollect; his memory was like a miser's pocket, from which you cannot entice a quarter of a kopek. Stretching himself, he heard something clash at his feet. He looked, —two bags of gold. Then only, as if in a dream, he recollected that he had been seeking some treasure, that something had frightened him in the woods. . . . But at what price he had obtained it, and how, he could by no means understand.

Korzh saw the sacks, —and was mollified. “Such a Petrus, quite unheard of! yes, and did I not love him? Was he not to me as my

own son?" And the old fellow carried on his fiction until it reduced him to tears. Pidórka began to tell him how some passing gypsies had stolen Ivas; but Petró could not even recall him — to such a degree had the Devil's influence darkened his mind! There was no reason for delay. The Pole was dismissed, and the wedding-feast prepared; rolls were baked, towels and handkerchiefs embroidered; the young people were seated at table; the wedding-loaf was cut; banduras, cymbals, pipes, kobzi, sounded, and pleasure was rife. . . .

A wedding in the olden times was not like one of the present day. My grandfather's aunt used to tell — what doings! — how the maidens — in festive head-dresses of yellow, blue, and pink ribbons, above which they bound gold braid; in thin chemisettes embroidered on all the seams with red silk, and strewn with tiny silver flowers; in morocco shoes, with high iron heels — danced the gorlitz as swimmingly as peacocks, and as wildly as the whirlwind; how the youths — with their ship-shaped caps upon their heads, the crowns of gold brocade, with a little slit at the nape where the hair-net

peeped through, and two horns projecting, one in front and another behind, of the very finest black lambskin ; in kuntushas of the finest blue silk with red borders — stepped forward one by one, their arms akimbo in stately form, and executed the gopak ; how the lads — in tall Cossack caps, and light cloth svtikas, girt with silver embroidered belts, their short pipes in their teeth — skipped before them, and talked nonsense. Even Korzh could not contain himself, as he gazed at the young people, from getting gay in his old age. Bandura in hand, alternately puffing at his pipe and singing, a brandy-glass upon his head, the gray-beard began the national dance amid loud shouts from the merry-makers. What will not people devise in merry mood ! They even began to disguise their faces. They did not look like human beings. They are not to be compared with the disguises which we have at our weddings nowadays. What do they do now ? Why, imitate gypsies and Moscow pedlers. No ! then one used to dress himself as a Jew, another as the Devil : they would begin by kissing each other, and end by seizing each other by the

hair. . . . God be with them ! you laughed till you held your sides. They dressed themselves in Turkish and Tatar garments. All upon them glowed like a conflagration, . . . and then they began to joke and play pranks. . . . Well, then away with the saints !

An amusing thing happened to my grandfather's aunt, who was at this wedding. She was dressed in a voluminous Tatar robe, and, wineglass in hand, was entertaining the company. The Evil One instigated one man to pour vodka over her from behind. Another, at the same moment, evidently not by accident, struck a light, and touched it to her ; . . . the flame flashed up ; poor aunt, in terror, flung her robe from her, before them all. . . . Screams, laughter, jests, arose, as if at a fair. In a word, the old folks could not recall so merry a wedding.

Pidórka and Petrus began to live like a gentleman and lady. There was plenty of every thing, and every thing was handsome. . . . But honest people shook their heads when they looked at their way of living. "From the Devil no good can come," they unanimously

agreed. "Whence, except from the tempter of orthodox people, came this wealth? Where else could he get such a lot of gold? Why, on the very day that he got rich, did Basavriuk vanish as if into thin air?" Say, if you can, that people imagine things! In fact, a month had not passed, and no one would have recognized Petrus. Why, what had happened to him? God knows. He sits in one spot, and says no word to any one: he thinks continually, and seems to be trying to recall something. When Pidórka succeeds in getting him to speak, he seems to forget himself, carries on a conversation, and even grows cheerful; but if he inadvertently glances at the sacks, "Stop, stop! I have forgotten," he cries, and again plunges into revery, and again strives to recall something. Sometimes when he has sat long in a place, it seems to him as though it were coming, just coming back to mind, . . . and again all fades away. It seems as if he is sitting in the tavern: they bring him vodka; vodka stings him; vodka is repulsive to him. Some one comes along, and strikes him on the shoulder; . . . but beyond that every thing is

veiled in darkness before him. The perspiration streams down his face, and he sits exhausted in the same place.

What did not Pidórka do? She consulted the sorceress; and they poured out fear, and brewed stomach ache,¹ — but all to no avail. And so the summer passed. Many a Cossack had mowed and reaped: many a Cossack, more enterprising than the rest, had set off upon an expedition. Flocks of ducks were already crowding our marshes, but there was not even a hint of improvement.

It was red upon the steppes. Ricks of grain, like Cossacks' caps, dotted the fields here and there. On the highway were to be encountered wagons loaded with brushwood and logs. The ground had become more solid, and in places was touched with frost. Already

¹ "To pour out fear," is done with us in case of fear; when it is desired to know what caused it, melted lead or wax is poured into water, and the object whose form it assumes is the one which frightened the sick person; after this, the fear departs. *Sónyashnitza* is brewed for giddiness, and pain in the bowels. To this end, a bit of stump is burned, thrown into a jug, and turned upside down into a bowl filled with water, which is placed on the patient's stomach: after an incantation, he is given a spoonful of this water to drink.

had the snow begun to besprinkle the sky, and the branches of the trees were covered with rime like rabbit-skin. Already on frosty days the red-breasted finch hopped about on the snow-heaps like a foppish Polish nobleman, and picked out grains of corn; and children, with huge sticks, chased wooden tops upon the ice; while their fathers lay quietly on the stove, issuing forth at intervals with lighted pipes in their lips, to growl, in regular fashion, at the orthodox frost, or to take the air, and thresh the grain spread out in the barn. At last the snow began to melt, and the ice rind slipped away: but Petró remained the same; and, the longer it went on, the more morose he grew. He sat in the middle of the cottage as though nailed to the spot, with the sacks of gold at his feet. He grew shy, his hair grew long, he became terrible; and still he thought of but one thing, still he tried to recall something, and got angry and ill-tempered because he could not recall it. Often, rising wildly from his seat, he gesticulates violently, fixes his eyes on something as though desirous of catching it: his lips move as

though desirous of uttering some long-forgotten word — and remain speechless. Fury takes possession of him: he gnaws and bites his hands like a man half crazy, and in his vexation tears out his hair by the handful, until, calming down, he falls into forgetfulness, as it were, and again begins to recall, and is again seized with fury and fresh tortures. . . . What visitation of God is this?

Pidórka was neither dead nor alive. At first it was horrible to her to remain alone in the cottage; but, in course of time, the poor woman grew accustomed to her sorrow. But it was impossible to recognize the Pidórka of former days. No blush, no smile: she was thin and worn with grief, and had wept her bright eyes away. Once, some one who evidently took pity on her, advised her to go to the witch who dwelt in the Bear's ravine, and enjoyed the reputation of being able to cure every disease in the world. She determined to try this last remedy: word by word she persuaded the old woman to come to her. This was St. John's Eve, as it chanced. Petró lay insensible on the bench, and did not observe the new-comer.

Little by little he rose, and looked about him. Suddenly he trembled in every limb, as though he were on the scaffold: his hair rose upon his head, . . . and he laughed such a laugh as pierced Pidórka's heart with fear. "I have remembered, remembered!" he cried in terrible joy; and, swinging a hatchet round his head, he flung it at the old woman with all his might. The hatchet penetrated the oaken door two *vershok* (three inches and a half). The old woman disappeared; and a child of seven in a white blouse, with covered head, stood in the middle of the cottage. . . . The sheet flew off. "Ivas!" cried Pidórka, and ran to him; but the apparition became covered from head to foot with blood, and illumined the whole room with red light. . . . She ran into the passage in her terror, but, on recovering herself a little, wished to help him; in vain! the door had slammed to behind her so securely that she could not open it. People ran up, and began to knock: they broke in the door, as though there were but one mind among them. The whole cottage was full of smoke; and just in the middle, where Petrus had stood, was a heap of

ashes, from which smoke was still rising. They flung themselves upon the sacks : only broken potsherds lay there instead of ducats. The Cossacks stood with staring eyes and open mouths, not daring to move a hair, as if rooted to the earth, such terror did this wonder inspire in them.

I do not remember what happened next. Pidórka took a vow to go upon a pilgrimage, collected the property left her by her father, and in a few days it was as if she had never been in the village. Whither she had gone, no one could tell. Officious old women would have despatched her to the same place whither Petró had gone ; but a Cossack from Kief reported that he had seen, in a cloister, a nun withered to a mere skeleton, who prayed unceasingly ; and her fellow-villagers recognized her as Pidórka, by all the signs, — that no one had ever heard her utter a word ; that she had come on foot, and had brought a frame for the ikon of God's mother, set with such brilliant stones that all were dazzled at the sight.

But this was not the end, if you please. On the same day that the Evil One made way with

Petrus, Basavriuk appeared again ; but all fled from him. They knew what sort of a bird he was, — none else than Satan, who had assumed human form in order to unearth treasures ; and, since treasures do not yield to unclean hands, he seduced the young. That same year, all deserted their earth huts, and collected in a village ; but, even there, there was no peace, on account of that accursed Basavriuk. My late grandfather's aunt said that he was particularly angry with her, because she had abandoned her former tavern, and tried with all his might to revenge himself upon her. Once the village elders were assembled in the tavern, and, as the saying goes, were arranging the precedence at the table, in the middle of which was placed a small roasted lamb, shame to say. They chattered about this, that, and the other, — among the rest about various marvels and strange things. Well, they saw something ; it would have been nothing if only one had seen it, but all saw it ; and it was this : the sheep raised his head ; his goggling eyes became alive and sparkled ; and the black, bristling mustache, which appeared for one instant, made a sig-

nificant gesture at those present. All, at once, recognized Basavriuk's countenance in the sheep's head: my grandfather's aunt thought it was on the point of asking for vodka. . . . The worthy elders seized their hats, and hastened home.

Another time, the church starost¹ himself, who was fond of an occasional private interview with my grandfather's brandy-glass, had not succeeded in getting to the bottom twice, when he beheld the glass bowing very low to him. "Satan take you, let us make the sign of the cross over you!" . . . And the same marvel happened to his better half. She had just begun to mix the dough in a huge kneading-trough, when suddenly the trough sprang up. "Stop, stop! where are you going?" Putting its arms akimbo, with dignity, it went skipping all about the cottage. . . . You may laugh, but it was no laughing-matter to our grandfathers. And in vain did Father Athanasii go through all the village with holy water, and chase the Devil through all the streets with his brush; and my late grandfather's aunt long complained,

¹ Elder.

that, as soon as it was dark, some one came knocking at her door, and scratching at the wall.

Well! All appears to be quiet now, in the place where our village stands; but it was not so very long ago — my father was still alive — that I remember how a good man could not pass the ruined tavern, which a dishonest race had long managed for their own interest. From the smoke-blackened chimneys, smoke poured out in a pillar, and rising high in the air, as if to take an observation, rolled off like a cap, scattering burning coals over the steppe; and Satan (the son of a dog should not be mentioned) sobbed so pitifully in his lair, that the startled ravens rose in flocks from the neighboring oak-wood, and flew through the air with wild cries.

OLD-FASHIONED FARMERS.¹

I AM very fond of the (modest life of those isolated owners of distant villages), which are usually called “old-fashioned” in Little Russia, and which, like ruinous and picturesque houses, are beautiful through their simplicity, and complete contrast to a new, regular building, whose walls the rain has never yet washed, whose roof is not yet covered with mould, and whose porch, undeprived of its stucco, does not yet show its red bricks. I love sometimes to enter for a moment the sphere of this unusually isolated

¹ This is the first story in the volume entitled “Mirgorod,” which forms a continuation of the “Tales at a Farmhouse near Dikanka.” The introduction consists of the two following quotations:—

“Mirgorod is a large town of great importance situated on the river Khorol. It has one rope-walk, one brick-yard, four water and forty-five wind mills.” — *Zyablovsky's Geography*.

“Though the *bubliki* [cracknels] are made of black dough in Mirgorod, they are quite savory.” — *Extract from the Journal of a Traveller*.

life, where no wish flies beyond the palings surrounding the little yard, beyond the hedge of the garden filled with apples and plums, beyond the izbás of the village surrounding it, having on one side, shaded by willows, elder-bushes and pear-trees. (The life of the modest owners is so quiet, so quiet, that you forget yourself for a moment, and think that the passions, wishes, and the uneasy offspring of the Evil One, which keep the world in an uproar, do not exist at all, and that you have only beheld them in some brilliant, dazzling vision.

I can see now the low-roofed little house, with its veranda of slender, blackened tree-trunks, surrounding it on all sides, so that, in case of a thunder or hail storm, the window-shutters could be shut without your getting wet; behind it, fragrant wild-cherry trees, whole rows of dwarf fruit-trees, overtopped by crimson cherries and a purple sea of plums, covered with a lead-colored bloom, luxuriant maples, under the shade of which rugs were spread for repose; in front of the house the spacious yard, with short, fresh grass, through which paths had been trodden from the store-

houses to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the apartments of the family ; a long-legged goose drinking water, with her young goslings, soft as down ; the picket-fence hung with bunches of dried pears and apples, and rugs put out to air ; a cart full of melons standing near the store-house ; the oxen unyoked, and lying lazily beside it. All this has for me an indescribable charm, perhaps because I no longer see it, and because any thing from which we are separated is pleasing to us. However that may be, from the moment that my britchka drove up to the porch of this little house, my soul entered into a wonderfully pleasant and peaceful state : the horses trotted merrily up to the porch ; the coachman climbed very quietly down from the seat, and filled his pipe, as though he had arrived at his own house ; the very bark which the phlegmatic dogs set up, was soothing to my ears.

But more than all else, the owners of this isolated nook, — an old man and old woman, — hastening anxiously out to meet me, pleased me. Their faces present themselves even now, sometimes, in the

motion, amid fashionable dress-suits ; and then suddenly a half-dreaming state overpowers me, and the past flits before me. (On their countenances are always depicted such goodness, such cheerfulness, and purity of heart,) that you involuntarily renounce, if only for a brief space of time, all bold conceptions, and imperceptibly enter with all your feelings into this lowly bucolic life.

To this day I cannot forget two old people of the last century, who are, alas ! no more ; but my heart is still full of pity, and my feelings are strangely moved when I fancy myself driving up sometimes to their former dwelling, now deserted, and see the cluster of decaying cottages, the weedy pond, and, where the little house used to stand, an overgrown pit, and nothing more. It is melancholy. But let us return to our story.

Athanasii Ivanovitch Tovstogub, and his wife Pulcheria Ivanovna Tovstogubikha, according to the neighboring muzhiks' way of putting it, were the old people whom I began to tell about. He was a painter, and wished to represent Baucis on canvas, I could have

found no better models than they. Athanasii Ivanovitch was sixty years old, Pulcheria Ivanovna was fifty-five. Athanasii Ivanovitch was tall, always wore a sheepskin jacket covered with camel's hair, sat all doubled up, and was almost always smiling, whether he was telling a story or only listening. Pulcheria Ivanovna was rather serious, and hardly ever laughed; but her face and eyes expressed so much goodness, so much readiness to treat you to all the best they owned, that you would probably have found a smile too repellingly sweet for her kind face. The delicate wrinkles were so agreeably disposed upon their countenances, that an artist would certainly have appropriated them. It seemed as though you might read their whole life in them, the pure, peaceful life, led by the old patriotic, simple-hearted, and, at the same time, wealthy families, which always offer a contrast to those baser Little Russians, who work up from tar-burners and pedlers, throng the court-rooms like grasshoppers, squeeze the last kopek from their fellow-countrymen, crowd Petersburg with scandal-mongers, finally acquire a capital, and triumphantly add an *f* to their

surnames ending in *o*. No, they did not resemble those despicable and miserable creatures, but all ancient and native Little Russian families.

It was impossible to behold without sympathy their mutual affection. They never called each other *thou*, but always *you*, — “You, Athanasii Ivanovitch ;” “You, Pulcheria Ivanovna.”

“Was it you who sold the chair, Athanasii Ivanovitch ?”

“No matter. Don’t you be angry, Pulcheria Ivanovna : it was I.”

They never had any children, so all their affection was concentrated upon themselves. At one time, in his youth, Athanasii Ivanovitch served in the militia, and was afterwards brevet-major ; but that was very long ago, and Athanasii Ivanovitch hardly ever thought of it himself. Athanasii Ivanovitch married at thirty, while he was still young, and wore embroidered waistcoats. He even very cleverly abducted Pulcheria Ivanovna, whose parents did not wish to give her to him : but this, too, he recollected very little about ; at least, he never mentioned it.

All these long-past and unusual events had

given place to a quiet and lonely life, to those dreamy yet harmonious fancies which you experience seated on a country balcony facing the garden, when the beautiful rain patters luxuriously on the leaves, flows in murmuring rivulets, inclining your limbs to repose, and meanwhile the rainbow creeps from behind the trees, and its arch shines dully with its seven hues in the sky ; or when your calash rolls on, pushing its way among green bushes, and the quail calls, and the fragrant grass, with the ears of grain and field-flowers, creeps into the door of your carriage, pleasantly striking against your hands and face.

He always listened with a pleasant smile to his guests : sometimes he talked himself, but generally he asked questions. He was not one of the old men who weary you with praises of the old times, and complaints of the new : on the contrary, as he put questions to you, he exhibited the greatest curiosity about, and sympathy with, the circumstances of your life, your success, or lack of success, in which kind old men usually are interested ; although it closely resembles the curiosity of a child, who

examines the seal on your fob while he is asking his questions. Then, it might be said that his face beamed with kindness.

The rooms of the little house in which our old people lived were small, low-studded, such as are generally to be seen with old-fashioned people. In each room stood a huge stove, which occupied nearly one-third of the space. These little rooms were frightfully warm, because both Athanasii Ivanovitch and Pulcheria Ivanovna were fond of heat. All their fuel was stored in the vestibule, which was always filled nearly to the ceiling with straw, which is generally used in Little Russia in the place of wood. The crackling and blaze of burning straw render the ante-rooms extremely pleasant on winter evenings, when some lively youth, chilled with his pursuit of some brunette maid, rushes in, beating his hands together.

The walls of the rooms were adorned with pictures in narrow, old-fashioned frames. I am positive that their owners had long ago forgotten their subjects ; and, if some of them had been carried off, they probably would not have noticed it. Two of them were large portraits

in oil : one represented some bishop ; the other, Peter III. From a narrow frame gazed the Duchess of La Vallière, spotted by flies. Around the windows and above the doors were a multitude of small pictures, which you grow accustomed to regard as spots on the wall, and which you never look at. The floor in nearly all the rooms was of clay, but smoothly plastered down, and more cleanly kept than any polished floor of wood in a wealthy house, languidly swept by a sleepy gentleman in livery. Pulcheria Ivanovna's room was all furnished with chests and boxes, and little chests and little boxes. A multitude of little packages and bags, containing seeds, — flower-seeds, vegetable-seeds, watermelon-seeds, — hung on the walls. A great many balls of various colored woollens, scraps of old dresses, sewed together during half a century, were stuffed away in the corners, in the chests, and between the chests. Pulcheria Ivanovna was a famous housewife, and saved up every thing ; though she sometimes did not know herself what use she could ever make of it.

But the most noticeable thing about the

house was the singing doors. Just as soon as day arrived, the songs of the doors resounded throughout the house. I cannot say why they sang. Either the rusty hinges were the cause, or else the mechanic who made them concealed some secret in them ; but it was worthy of note, that each door had its own particular voice : the door leading to the bedroom sang the thinnest of sopranos ; the dining-room door growled a bass ; but the one which led into the vestibule gave out a strange, quavering, yet groaning sound, so that, if you listened to it, you heard at last, quite clearly, "Batiushka, I am freezing." I know that this noise is very displeasing to many, but I am very fond of it ; and if I chance to hear a door squeak here, I seem to see the country ; the low-ceiled chamber, lighted by a candle in an old-fashioned candlestick ; the supper on the table ; May darkness ; night peeping in from the garden through the open windows upon the table set with dishes ; the nightingale, which floods the garden, house, and the distant river with her trills ; the rustle and the murmuring of the boughs, . . . and, O God ! what a long chain of reminiscences is woven !

The chairs in the room were of wood, and massive, in the style which generally distinguished those of olden times; all had high, turned backs of natural wood, without any paint or varnish; they were not even upholstered, and somewhat resembled those which are still used by bishops. Three-cornered tables stood in the corners, a square one before the sofa; and there was a large mirror in a thin gold frame, carved in leaves, which the flies had covered with black spots; in front of the sofa was a mat with flowers resembling birds, and birds resembling flowers: and this constituted nearly the whole furniture of the far from elegant little house where my old people lived. The maids' room was filled with young and elderly serving-women in striped petticoats, to whom Pulcheria Ivanovna sometimes gave some trifles to sew, and whom she made pick over berries, but who ran about the kitchen or slept the greater part of the time. Pulcheria Ivanovna regarded it as a necessity to keep them in the house; and she looked strictly after their morals, but to no purpose.

Upon the window-panes buzzed a terrible

number of flies, overpowered by the heavy bass of the bumble-bee, sometimes accompanied by the penetrating shriek of the wasp; but, as soon as the candles were brought in, this whole horde betook themselves to their night quarters, and covered the entire ceiling with a black cloud.

Athanasii Ivanovitch very rarely occupied himself with the farming; although he sometimes went out to the mowers and reapers, and gazed quite intently at their work. All the burden of management devolved upon Pulcheria Ivanovna. Pulcheria Ivanovna's house-keeping consisted of an incessant unlocking and locking of the storeroom, in salting, drying, preserving innumerable quantities of fruits and vegetables. Her house was exactly like a chemical laboratory. A fire was constantly laid under the apple-tree; and the kettle or the brass pan with preserves, jelly, marmalade, — made with honey, with sugar, and I know not with what else, — was hardly ever removed from the tripod. Under another tree the coachman was forever distilling vodka with peach-leaves, with wild cherry, cherry-flowers, gentian, or

cherry-stones in a copper still ; and, at the end of the process, he never was able to control his tongue, chattered all sorts of nonsense, which Pulcheria Ivanovna did not understand, and took himself off to the kitchen to sleep. Such a quantity of all this stuff was preserved, salted, and dried, that it would probably have overwhelmed the whole yard at last (for Pulcheria Ivanovna loved to lay in a store beyond what was calculated for consumption), if the greater part of it had not been devoured by the maid-servants, who crept into the store-room, and over-ate themselves to such a fearful extent, that they groaned and complained of their stomachs for a whole day afterwards.

It was less possible for Pulcheria Ivanovna to attend to the agricultural department. The steward conspired with the village elder to rob in the most shameless manner. They had got into a habit of going to their master's forest as though to their own ; they manufactured a lot of sledges, and sold them at the neighboring fair ; besides which they sold all the stout oaks to the neighboring Cossacks for beams, for a mill. Only once Pulcheria Ivanovna wished to

inspect her forest. For this purpose the droshky, with its huge leather apron, was harnessed. As soon as the coachman shook his reins, and the horses (which had served in the militia) started, it filled the air with strange sounds, as though fifes, tambourines, and drums were suddenly audible: every nail and iron bolt rattled so, that, when the pani drove from the door, they could be heard clear to the mill, although that was not less than two versts away. Pulcheria Ivanovna could not fail to observe the terrible havoc in the forest, and the loss of oaks which she recollected from her childhood as being centuries old.

"Why have the oaks become so scarce, Nitchípor?" she said to the steward, who was also present. "See that the hairs on your head do not become scarce."

"Why are they scarce?" said the steward. "They disappeared, they disappeared altogether: the lightning struck them, and the worms ate them. They disappeared, pani, they disappeared."

Pulcheria Ivanovna was quite satisfied with this answer, and on returning home merely

gave orders that double guards should be placed over the Spanish cherries and the large winter-pear trees in the garden.

These worthy managers — the steward and the village elder — considered it quite unnecessary to bring all the flour to the storehouses at the manor, and that half was quite sufficient for the masters; and finally, that half was brought sprinkled or wet through — what had been rejected at the fair. But no matter how the steward and village elder plundered, or how horribly they devoured things at the house, from the housekeeper down to the pigs, who not only made way with frightful quantities of plums and apples, but even shook the trees with their snouts in order to bring down a whole shower of fruit; no matter how the sparrows and crows pecked, or how many presents the servants carried to their friends in other villages, including even old linen and yarn from the storeroom, which all brought up eventually at the universal source, namely, the tavern; no matter how guests, phlegmatic coachmen, and lackeys stole, — yet the fruitful earth yielded such an abundance, Athanasii Ivanovitch and

Pulcheria Ivanovna needed so little, that all this abominable robbery seemed to pass quite unperceived in their household.

Both the old folks, in accordance with old-fashioned customs, were very fond of eating. As soon as daylight dawned (they always rose early), and the doors had begun their many-toned concert, they seated themselves at table, and drank coffee. When Athanasii Ivanovitch had drunk his coffee, he went out, and, flirting his handkerchief, said, "Kish, kish! go away from the veranda, geese!" In the yard he generally encountered the steward: he usually entered into conversation with him, inquired about the work with the greatest minuteness, and communicated such a number of observations and orders as would have caused any one to wonder at his knowledge of affairs; and no novice would have ventured to suppose that such an acute master could be robbed. But his steward was a clever rascal: he knew well what answers it was necessary to give, and, better still, how to manage things.

After this, Athanasii Ivanovitch returned to

the room, and said, approaching Pulcheria Ivanovna, "Well, Pulcheria Ivanovna, is it time to eat something, perhaps?"

"What shall we have to eat now, Athanasii Ivanovitch, — some wheat and tallow cakes, or some pies with poppy-seeds, or some salted mushrooms?"

"Some mushrooms, then, if you please, or some pies," replied Athanasii Ivanovitch; and then suddenly a table-cloth would make its appearance on the table, with the pies and mushrooms.

An hour before dinner, Athanasii Ivanovitch took another snack, and drank vodka from an ancient silver cup, ate mushrooms, divers dried fish, and other things. They sat down to dine at twelve o'clock. Besides the dishes and sauce-boats, there stood upon the table a multitude of pots with covers pasted on, that the appetizing products of the savory old-fashioned cooking might not be exhaled abroad. At dinner the conversation turned upon subjects closely connected with the meal.

"It seems to me," Athanasii Ivanovitch generally observed, "that this groats is burned a

little. Does it strike you so, Pulcheria Ivanovna?"

"No, Athanasii Ivanovitch: put on a little more butter, and then it will not taste burned; or take this mushroom sauce, and pour over it."

"If you please," said Athanasii Ivanovitch, handing his plate, "let us see how that will do."

After dinner Athanasii Ivanovitch went to lie down for an hour, after which Pulcheria Ivanovna brought him a sliced watermelon, and said, "Here, try this, Athanasii Ivanovitch; see what a good melon it is."

"Don't trust it because it is red in the centre, Pulcheria Ivanovna," said Athanasii Ivanovitch, taking a good-sized chunk. "Sometimes they are red, but not good."

But the watermelon slowly disappeared. Then Athanasii Ivanovitch ate a few pears, and went out for a walk in the garden with Pulcheria Ivanovna. On returning to the house, Pulcheria went about her own affairs: but he sat down on the veranda facing the yard, and observed how the storeroom's interior was constantly disclosed, and again concealed; and

how the girls jostled one another as they carried in, or brought out, all sorts of stuff in wooden boxes, sieves, trays, and other receptacles for fruit. After waiting a while, he sent for Pulcheria Ivanovna, or went to her himself, and said, "What is there for me to eat, Pulcheria Ivanovna?"

"What is there?" said Pulcheria Ivanovna: "shall I go and tell them to bring you some berry tarts which I had set aside for you?"

"That would be good," replied Athanasii Ivanovitch.

"Or perhaps you could eat some kissel?"¹

"That is good too," replied Athanasii Ivanovitch; whereupon all was brought immediately, and eaten in due course.

Before supper Athanasii Ivanovitch took another snack. At half-past nine they sat down to supper. After supper they went directly to bed, and universal silence settled down upon this busy yet quiet nook.

The chamber in which Athanasii Ivanovitch and Pulcheria Ivanovna slept, was so hot that very few people could have stayed in it more

¹ Sourish jelly.

than a few hours : but Athanasii Ivanovitch, for the sake of more warmth, slept upon the stove-bench ; although the excessive heat caused him to rise several times in the course of the night, and walk about the room. Sometimes Athanasii Ivanovitch groaned as he walked about the room.

Then Pulcheria Ivanovna inquired, “Why do you groan, Athanasii Ivanovitch?”

“God knows, Pulcheria Ivanovna ! it seems as if my stomach ached a little,” said Athanasii Ivanovitch.

“Hadn’t you better eat something, Athanasii Ivanovitch?”

“I don’t know, — perhaps it would be well, Pulcheria Ivanovna : by the way, what is there to eat?”

“Sour milk, or some stewed dried pears.”

“If you please, I will try them,” said Athanasii Ivanovitch. The sleepy maid was sent to ransack the cupboards, and Athanasii Ivanovitch ate a plateful ; after which he remarked, “Now I seem to feel relieved.”

Sometimes when the weather was clear, and the rooms were very much heated, Athanasii

Ivanovitch got merry, and loved to tease Pulcheria Ivanovna, and talk of something out of the ordinary.

“Well, Pulcheria Ivanovna,” he said, “what if our house were to suddenly burn down, what would become of us?”

“God forbid!” ejaculated Pulcheria Ivanovna, crossing herself.

“Well, now, just suppose a case, that our house should burn down. Where should we go then?”

“God knows what you are saying, Athanasii Ivanovitch! How could our house burn down? God will not permit that.”

“Well, but if it did burn?”

“Well, then, we should go to the kitchen. You could occupy for a time the room which the housekeeper now has.”

“But if the kitchen burned too?”

“The idea! God will preserve us from such a catastrophe as the house and the kitchen both burning down. In that case, we could go into the storehouse while a new house was being built.”

“And if the storehouse burned also?”

“God knows what you are saying! I won’t listen to you! it is a sin to talk so, and God will punish you for such speeches.”

But Athanasii Ivanovitch, content with having had his joke over Pulcheria Ivanovna, sat quietly in his chair, and smiled.

But the old people were most interesting of all to me when they had visitors. Then every thing about their house assumed a different aspect. It may be said that these good people only lived for their guests. They vied with each other in offering you every thing which the place produced. But the most pleasing feature of it all to me was, that, in all their kindness, there was nothing feigned. Their kindness and readiness to oblige were so gently expressed in their faces, so became them, that you involuntarily yielded to their requests. These were the outcome of the pure, clear simplicity of their good, sincere souls. Their joy was not at all of the sort with which the official of the court favors you, when he has become a personage through your exertions, and calls you his benefactor, and fawns at your feet. No guest was ever permitted to depart

on the day of his arrival : he must needs pass the night with them.

“How is it possible to set out at so late an hour upon so long a journey !” Pulcheria Ivanovna always observed. (The visitor usually lived three or four versts from them.)

“Of course,” said Athanasii Ivanovitch, “it is impossible on all accounts : robbers, or some other evil men, will attack you.”

“May God in his mercy deliver us from robbers !” said Pulcheria Ivanovna. “And why mention such things at night ? Robbers, or no robbers, it is dark, and no fit time to travel. And your coachman, . . . I know your coachman : he is so weak and small, any horse could kill him ; besides, he has probably been drinking, and is now asleep somewhere.”

And the visitor was obliged to remain. But the evening in the warm, low room, cheerful, strewn with stories, the steam rising from the food upon the table, which was always nourishing, and cooked in a masterly manner, — this was his reward. I seem now to see Athanasii Ivanovitch bending to seat himself at the table, with his constant smile, and listening with

attention, and even with delight, to his guest. The conversation often turned on politics. The guest, who also emerged but rarely from his village, frequently with significant mien and mysterious expression of countenance, aired his surmises, and told how the French had formed a secret compact with the English to let Buonaparte loose upon Russia again, or talked merely of the impending war; and then Athanasii Ivanovitch often remarked, without appearing to look at Pulcheria Ivanovna, —

“I am thinking of going to the war myself. Why cannot I go to the war?”

“You have been already,” broke in Pulcheria Ivanovna. “Don’t believe him,” she said, turning to the visitor: “what good would he, an old man, do in the war? The very first soldier would shoot him; by Heaven, he would shoot him! he would take aim, and fire at him.”

“What?” said Athanasii Ivanovitch. “I would shoot him.”

“Just listen to him!” interposed Pulcheria Ivanovna. “Why should he go to the war? And his pistols have been rusty this long time, and are lying in the storeroom. If you could

only see them! the powder would burst them before they would fire. He will blow his hands off, and disfigure his face, and be miserable forever after!”

“What’s that?” said Athanasii Ivanovitch. “I will buy myself new arms: I will take my sword or a Cossack lance.”

“These are all inventions: as soon as a thing comes into his head, he begins to talk about it!” interrupted Pulcheria Ivanovna with vexation. “I know that he is jesting, but it is unpleasant to hear him all the same. He always talks so: sometimes you listen and listen, until it is perfectly frightful.”

But Athanasii Ivanovitch, satisfied with having frightened Pulcheria Ivanovna, laughed as he sat doubled up in his chair.

Pulcheria Ivanovna seemed to me most noteworthy when she offered her guest *zakuska*.¹ “Here,” she said, taking the cork from a decanter, “is genuine yarrow or sage vodka; if any one’s shoulder-blades or loins ache, this is a

¹ A whet to the appetite preliminary to dinner, consisting of caviare, herring, smoked salmon, sardines, smoked goose, sausages, cheese-bread, butter, vodka, etc.

very good remedy : here is some with gentian ; if you have a ringing in your ears, or eruption on your face, this is very good : and this is distilled with peach-kernels ; here, take a glass ; what a fine perfume ! If ever any one, in getting out of bed, strikes himself against the corner of the clothes-press or table, and a bump comes on his forehead, all he has to do is to drink a glass of this before meals, — and it all disappears out of hand, as though it had never been.” Then followed a catalogue of the other decanters, almost all of which possessed some healing properties. Having loaded down her guest with this complete apothecary shop, she led him to where a multitude of dishes were set out. “Here are mushrooms with summer-savory ; and here are some with cloves and walnuts. A Turkish woman taught me how to pickle them, at a time when there were still Turkish prisoners among us. She was a good Turk, and it was not noticeable that she professed the Turkish faith : she behaved very nearly as we do, only she would not eat pork ; they say that it is forbidden by their laws. Here are mushrooms with currant-leaves and

nutmeg; and here, some with clove-pinks. These are the first I have cooked in vinegar. I don't know how good they are. I learned the secret from Ivan's father: you must first spread oak-leaves in a small cask, and then sprinkle on pepper and saltpetre, and then more, until it becomes the color of hawk-weed, and then spread the liquid over the mushrooms. And here are cheese-tarts; these are different: and here are some pies with cabbage and buckwheat flour, which Athanasii Ivanovitch is extremely fond of."

"Yes," added Athanasii Ivanovitch, "I am very fond of them: they are soft and a little tart."

Pulcheria Ivanovna was generally in very good spirits when they had visitors. Good old woman! she belonged entirely to her guests. I loved to stay with them; and though I overate myself horribly, like all who visited them, and although it was very bad for me, still, I was always glad to go to them. Besides, I think the air of Little Russia must possess some special properties which aid digestion; for if any one undertook to eat here, in that way, there is

no doubt but that he would find himself lying on the table instead of in bed.

Good old people! . . . But my story approaches a very sad event, which changed forever the life in that peaceful nook. This event appears all the more striking, because it resulted from the most insignificant cause. But, in accordance with the primitive arrangement of things, the most trifling causes produce the greatest events, and the grandest undertakings end in the most insignificant results. Some warrior collects all the forces of his empire, fights for several years, his colonels distinguish themselves, and at last it all ends in the acquisition of a bit of land on which no one would even plant potatoes; but sometimes, on the other hand, a couple of sausage-makers in different towns quarrel over some trifle, and the quarrel at last extends to the towns, and then to the villages and hamlets, and then to the whole empire. But we will drop these reflections; they lead nowhere: and, besides, I am not fond of reflections when they remain mere reflections.

Pulcheria Ivanovna had a little gray cat, which

almost always lay coiled up in a ball at her feet. Pulcheria Ivanovna stroked her occasionally, and tickled her neck with her finger, which the petted cat stretched out as long as possible. It was impossible to say that Pulcheria Ivanovna loved her so very much, but she had simply become attached to her from having become used to seeing her about continually. But Athanasii Ivanovitch often joked at such an attachment.

“I cannot see, Pulcheria Ivanovna, what you find attractive in that cat: of what use is she? If you had a dog, that would be quite another thing; you can take a dog out hunting: but what is a cat good for?”

“Be quiet, Athanasii Ivanovitch,” said Pulcheria Ivanovna: “you just like to talk, and that’s all. A dog is not clean; a dog soils things, and breaks every thing: but the cat is a peaceable beast; she does no harm to any one.”

But it made no difference to Athanasii Ivanovitch whether it was a cat or a dog: he only said it to tease Pulcheria Ivanovna.

Behind their garden was a large wood, which

had been spared by the enterprising steward, possibly because the sound of the axe might have reached the ears of Pulcheria Ivanovna. It was dense, neglected: the old tree-trunks were concealed by luxuriant hazel-bushes, and resembled the feathered legs of pigeons. In this wood dwelt wild-cats. The wild forest-cats must not be confounded with those which run about the roofs of houses: being in the city, they are much more civilized, in spite of their savage nature, than the denizens of the woods. These, on the contrary, are mostly fierce and wild: they are always lean and ugly, and miauw in rough, untutored voices. They sometimes scratch for themselves underground passages to the storehouses, and steal tallow. They occasionally make their appearance in the kitchen, springing suddenly in at an open window, when they see that the cook has gone off among the grass. As a rule, noble feelings are unknown to them: they live by thievery, and strangle the little sparrows in their very nests. These cats had a long conference with Pulcheria Ivanovna's tame cat, through a hole under the storehouse, and finally led her astray, as a detachment of

soldiers leads astray a dull peasant. Pulcheria Ivanovna noticed that her cat was missing, and sent to look for her ; but no cat was to be found. Three days passed : Pulcheria Ivanovna felt sorry, but finally forgot all about her loss.

One day she had been inspecting her vegetable-garden, and was returning with her hands full of fresh green cucumbers, which she had picked for Athanasii Ivanovitch, when a most pitiful miauwing struck her ear. She instinctively called, "Kitty! kitty!" and out from the tall grass came her gray cat, thin and starved. It was evident that she had not had a mouthful of food for days. Pulcheria Ivanovna continued to call her ; but the cat stood crying before her, and did not venture to approach. It was plain that she had become quite wild in that time. Pulcheria Ivanovna stepped forward, still calling the cat, which followed her timidly to the fence. Finally, seeing familiar places, it entered the room. Pulcheria Ivanovna at once ordered milk and meat to be given her, and, sitting down by her, enjoyed the avidity with which her poor pet swallowed morsel after morsel, and lapped the milk. The gray runaway

fattened before her very eyes, and began to eat less eagerly. Pulcheria Ivanovna reached out her hand to stroke her; but the ungrateful animal had evidently become too well used to robber cats, or adopted some romantic notion about love and poverty being better than a palace, for the cats were as poor as church-mice. However that may be, she sprang through the window, and none of the servants were able to catch her.

The old woman reflected. "It is my death which has come for me," she said to herself; and nothing could cheer her. All day she was sad. In vain did Athanasii Ivanovitch jest, and want to know why she had suddenly grown so grave. Pulcheria Ivanovna either made no reply, or one which was in no way satisfactory to Athanasii Ivanovitch. The next day she was visibly thinner.

"What is the matter with you, Pulcheria Ivanovna? You are not ill?"

"No, I am not ill, Athanasii Ivanovitch. I want to tell you about a strange occurrence. I know that I shall die this year: my death has already come for me."

Athanasii Ivanovitch's mouth became distorted with pain. Nevertheless, he tried to conquer the sad feeling in his mind, and said, smiling, "God only knows what you are talking about, Pulcheria Ivanovna! You must have drunk some peach infusion instead of your usual herb-tea."

"No, Athanasii Ivanovitch, I have not drunk the peach," said Pulcheria Ivanovna.

And Athanasii Ivanovitch was sorry that he had made fun of Pulcheria Ivanovna; and, as he looked at her, a tear hung on his lashes.

"I beg you, Athanasii Ivanovitch, to fulfil my wishes," said Pulcheria Ivanovna. "When I die, bury me by the church-wall. Put my grayish dress on me, — the one with small flowers on a cinnamon ground. My satin dress with red stripes, you must not put on me: a corpse needs no clothes. Of what use are they to her? But it will be good for you. Make yourself a fine dressing-gown, in case visitors come, so that you can make a good appearance when you receive them."

"God knows what you are saying, Pulcheria Ivanovna!" said Athanasii Ivanovitch. "Death

will come some time, but you frighten one with such remarks."

"No, Athanasii Ivanovitch: I know when my death is to be. But do not sorrow for me. I am old, and stricken in years; and you, too, are old. We shall soon meet in the other world."

But Athanasii Ivanovitch sobbed like a child.

"It is a sin to weep, Athanasii Ivanovitch. Do not sin, and anger God by your grief. I am not sorry to die: I am only sorry for one thing," — a heavy sob broke her speech for a moment, — "I am sorry because I do not know whom I shall leave with you, who will look after you when I am dead. You are like a little child: the one who attends you must love you." And her face expressed such deep and heart-felt sorrow, that I do not know whether any one could have beheld her, and remained unmoved.

"Mind, Yavdokha," she said, turning to the housekeeper, whom she had ordered to be summoned expressly, "that you look after your master when I am dead, and cherish him like the apple of your eye, like your own child. See that every thing he likes is prepared in the kitchen; that his linen and clothes are always

clean ; that, when visitors happen in, you dress him properly : otherwise he will come forth in his old dressing-gown, for he often forgets now whether it is a festival or an ordinary day. Do not take your eyes off him, Yavdokha. I will pray for you in the other world, and God will reward you. Do not forget, Yavdokha. You are old, — you have not long to live. Take no sins upon your soul. If you do not look well to him, you will have no happiness in the world. I will beg God myself to give you an unhappy ending. And you will be unhappy yourself, and your children will be unhappy ; and none of your race will ever have God's blessing."

Poor old woman ! she thought not of the great moment which awaited her, nor of her soul, nor of the future life : she thought only of her poor companion, with whom she had passed her life, and whom she was leaving an orphan and unprotected. After this fashion, she arranged every thing with great skill : so that, after her death, Athanasii Ivanovitch might not perceive her absence. Her faith in her approaching end was so firm, and her mind was so fixed upon it, that, in a few days, she actually

took to her bed, and was unable to take any nourishment.

Athanasii Ivanovitch was all attention, and never left her bedside. "Perhaps you could eat something, Pulcheria Ivanovna," he said, looking uneasily into her eyes. But Pulcheria Ivanovna made no reply. At length, after a long silence, she moved her lips, as though desirous of saying something -- and her breath fled.

Athanasii Ivanovitch was utterly amazed. It seemed to him so terrible, that he did not even weep. He gazed at her with troubled eyes, as though he did not comprehend the meaning of a corpse.

They laid the dead woman on a table, dressed her in the dress she herself had designated, crossed her arms, and placed a wax candle in her hand. He looked on without feeling. A throng of people of every class filled the court. Long tables were spread in the yard, and covered with heaps of *kutya*,¹ fruit-wine, and pies. The visitors talked, wept, looked at the dead woman, discussed her qualities, gazed at him;

¹ Rice cooked with honey and raisins.

but he looked upon it all as a stranger might. At last they carried out the dead woman: the people thronged after, and he followed. The priests were in full vestments, the sun shone, the infants cried in their mothers' arms, the larks sang, the children in their little blouses ran and capered along the road. Finally they placed the coffin over the grave. They bade him approach, and kiss the dead woman for the last time. He approached, and kissed her. Tears appeared in his eyes, but unfeeling tears. The coffin was lowered: the priest took the shovel, and flung in the first earth. The full choir of diaks and two sacristans sang the requiem under the blue, cloudless sky. The laborers grasped their shovels; and the grave was soon filled, the earth levelled off. Then he pressed forward. All stood aside to make room for him, wishing to know his object. He raised his eyes, looked about in a bewildered way, and said, "And so you have buried her! Why?" — He paused, and did not finish his sentence.

But when he returned home, when he saw that his chamber was empty, that even the chair, on which Pulcheria Ivanovna was wont

to sit, had been carried out, he sobbed, sobbed violently, irrepressibly ; and tears ran in streams from his dim eyes.

Five years passed. What grief will time not efface ! What passion is not cured in unequal battle with it ! I knew a man in the bloom of his youthful strength, full of true nobility and worth ; I knew that he loved, tenderly, passionately, wildly, boldly, modestly ; and in my presence, before my very eyes, almost, the object of his passion — a girl, gentle, beautiful as an angel — was struck by insatiable Death. I never beheld such a terrible outburst of spiritual suffering, such mad, fiery grief, such consuming despair, as agitated the unfortunate lover. I never thought that a man could make for himself such a hell, where there was neither shadow nor form, nor any thing in any way resembling hope. . . . They tried never to let him out of sight : they concealed all weapons from him by which he could commit suicide. Two weeks later he regained control of himself ; he began to laugh and jest ; they gave him his freedom, and the first use he made of it was to buy a pistol. One day a sudden shot

startled his relatives terribly: they rushed into the room, and beheld him stretched out, with his skull crushed. A physician who chanced to be present, and who enjoyed a universal reputation for skill, discovered some signs of life in him, found that the wound was not fatal; and he was cured, to the great amazement of all. The watchfulness over him was redoubled: even at table, they never put a knife near him, and tried to keep every thing away from him with which he could injure himself. But he soon found a fresh opportunity, and threw himself under the wheels of a passing carriage. His hand and feet were crushed, but again he was cured. A year after this I saw him in a crowded *salon*. He was talking gayly, as he covered a card; and behind him, leaning upon the back of his chair, stood his young wife, turning over his counters.

Being in the vicinity during the course of the five years already mentioned, which succeeded Pulcheria Ivanovna's death, I went to the little farm of Athanasii Ivanovitch, to inquire after my old neighbor, with whom I had formerly spent the day so agreeably, dining

always on the choicest delicacies of his kindhearted wife. When I drove up to the door, the house seemed twice as old; the peasants' izbâs were lying completely on one side, without doubt, exactly like their owners; the fence and hedge around the courtyard were completely dilapidated; and I myself saw the cook pull out a paling to heat the stove, when she had only a couple of steps to take in order to get the kindling-wood which had been piled there expressly. I stepped sadly upon the veranda: the same dogs, now blind, or with broken legs, raised their bushy tails, all matted with burs, and barked. The old man came out to meet me. So, this was he! I recognized him at once, but he was twice as bent as formerly. He knew me, and greeted me with the smile already so well known to me. I followed him into the room. All there seemed the same as in the past; but I observed a sort of strange disorder, a tangible absence of something: in a word, I experienced that strange sensation which takes possession of us when we enter, for the first time, the dwelling of a widower, whom we had heretofore known as

inseparable from the companion who has been with him all his life. This sensation resembles the one we feel when we see before us a man whom we had always known as healthy, without his legs. In every thing was visible the absence of painstaking Pulcheria Ivanovna. At table they gave us a knife without a handle: the dishes were not prepared with so much art. I did not care to inquire about the management of the estate: I was even afraid to glance at the farm-buildings.

When we sat down at the table, a maid fastened a napkin in front of Athanasii Ivanovitch; and it was very well that she did so, for otherwise he would have spotted his dressing-gown all over with gravy. I tried to interest him in something, and told him various bits of news. He listened with his usual smile, but his glance was at times quite unintelligent; and thoughts did not wander there, but only disappeared. He frequently raised a spoonful of porridge, and, instead of carrying it to his mouth, carried it to his nose; and, instead of sticking his fork into the chicken, he struck the decanter with it; and then the servant, taking his hand,

guided it to the chicken. We sometimes waited several minutes for the next course. Athanasii Ivanovitch remarked it himself, and said, "Why are they so long in bringing the food?" But I saw through a crack of the door, that the boy who brought the dishes was not thinking of it at all, but was fast asleep, with his head leaning on a stool.

"This is the dish," said Athanasii Ivanovitch, when they brought us *mnishki*¹ with cream, — "this is the dish," he continued, and I observed that his voice began to quiver, and that tears were ready to peep from his leaden eyes; but he collected all his strength, striving to repress them: "This is the dish which the — the — the de — ceas" — and the tears suddenly burst forth: his hand fell upon the plate, the plate was overturned, flew from the table, and was broken; the gravy ran all over him. He sat stupidly holding his spoon, and tears like a never-ceasing fountain flowed, flowed in streams down upon his napkin.

"O God!" I thought, as I looked at him, "five years of all-obliterating time, . . . an old

¹ Curds and flour.

man, an already apathetic old man, who, in all his life, apparently, was never agitated by any strong spiritual emotion, whose whole life seemed to consist in sitting on a high chair, in eating dried fish and pears, in telling good-natured stories — and yet so long and fervent a grief! Which wields the most powerful sway over us, passion, or habit? Or are all our strong impulses, all the whirlwinds of our desire and boiling passions, but the consequence of our fierce young growth, and only for that reason seem deep and annihilating?" However that may be, all our passion, on that occasion, seemed to me child's play beside this long, slow, almost insensible habit. Several times he tried to pronounce the dead woman's name; but in the middle of the word his peaceful and ordinary face became convulsively distorted, and a childlike fit of weeping cut me to the heart.

No: these were not the tears of which old people are generally so lavish, when representing to us their wretched condition and unhappiness. Neither were these the tears which they drop over a glass of punch. No: these

were tears which flowed without asking a reason, distilled from the bitter pain of a heart already growing cold.

He did not live long after this. I heard of his death recently. It was strange, though, that the circumstances attending his death somewhat resembled those of Pulcheria Ivanovna's. One day Athanasii Ivanovitch decided to take a short stroll in the garden. As he went slowly down the path, with his usual carelessness, a strange thing happened to him. All at once he heard some one behind him say, in a distinct voice, "Athanasii Ivanovitch." He turned round, but there was no one there. He looked on all sides: he peered into the shrubbery, — no one anywhere. The day was calm, and the sun shone clear. He pondered for a moment. His face lighted up; and at length he exclaimed, "It is Pulcheria Ivanovna calling me!"

It has doubtless happened to you, at some time or other, to hear a voice calling you by name, which the peasants explain by saying that a man's spirit is longing for him, and calls him, and that death inevitably follows. I confess that this mysterious call has always been

very terrifying to *me*. I remember to have often heard it in my childhood. Sometimes some one suddenly pronounced my name distinctly behind me. The day, on such occasions, was usually bright and sunny. Not a leaf on a tree moved. The silence was deathlike: even the grasshoppers had ceased to whir. There was not a soul in the garden. But I must confess, that, if the wildest and most stormy night, with the utmost inclemency of the elements, had overtaken me alone in the midst of an impassable forest, I should not have been so much alarmed by it as by this fearful stillness amid a cloudless day. On such occasions, I usually ran in the greatest terror, catching my breath, from the garden, and only regained composure when I encountered some person, the sight of whom dispelled the terrible inward solitude.

He yielded himself up utterly to his moral conviction that Pulcheria Ivanovna was calling him. He yielded with the will of a submissive child, withered away, coughed, melted away like a candle, and at length expired like it, when nothing remains to feed its poor flame. "Lay

me beside Pulcheria Ivanovna," — that was all he said before his death.

His wish was fulfilled; and they buried him beside the church, close to Pulcheria Ivanovna's grave. The guests at the funeral were few, but there was a throng of common and poor people. The house was already quite deserted. The enterprising clerk and village elder carried off to their izbás all the old household utensils and things which the housekeeper did not manage to appropriate.

There shortly appeared, from some unknown quarter, a distant relative, the heir of the property, who had served as lieutenant in some regiment, I forget which, and was a great reformer. He immediately perceived the great waste and neglect in the management. This decided him to root out, re-arrange, and introduce order into every thing. He purchased six fine English scythes, nailed a number on each izbá, and finally managed so well, that in six months the estate was in the hands of trustees. The wise trustees (consisting of an ex-assessor and a captain of the staff in faded uniform) promptly carried off all the hens and eggs. The izbás,

nearly all of which were lying on the ground, fell into complete ruin. The muzhiks wandered off, and were mostly numbered among the run-aways. The real owner himself (who lived on peaceable terms with his trustees, and drank punch with them) very rarely entered his village, and did not long live there. From that time forth, he has been going about to all the fairs in Little Russia, carefully inquiring prices at various large establishments, which sell at wholesale, flour, hemp, honey, and so forth, but he buys only the smallest trifles, such as a flint, a nail to clean his pipe, or any thing, the value of which at wholesale does not exceed a ruble.

THE TALE

OF HOW IVAN IVANOVITCH QUARRELLED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH.¹

I.

IVAN IVANOVITCH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH.

A FINE bekesh² has Ivan Ivanovitch! splendid! And what lambskin! deuce take it, what lambskin! blue-black with silver lights. I'll forfeit, I know not what, if you find any one else owning any such. Look at it, for Heaven's sake, especially when he stands talking with any one! look at him from the side: what a pleasure it is! To describe it, is impossible: velvet! silver! fire! Heavens! Nikolai the Wonder-worker, saint of God! why have not I such a bekesh? He had it made before

¹ From "Mirgorod."

² Short shooting-coat.

Agafya Fedosyevna went to Kief. You know Agafya Fedosyevna, the same who bit the assessor's ear off.

Ivan Ivanovitch was a very handsome man. What a house he had in Mirgorod ! Around it on every side was a veranda on oaken pillars, and on the veranda everywhere, were benches. Ivan Ivanovitch, when the weather gets too warm, throws off his bekeshas and his underclothing, remains in his shirt alone, and rests on the veranda, and observes what is going on in the court-yard and the street. What apples and pears he has under his very windows ! You have but to open the window, and the branches force themselves through into the room. All this is in front of the house ; but you should have seen what he had in the garden. What was there not there ? Plums, cherries, black-hearts, every sort of vegetable, sunflowers, cucumbers, melons, peas, a threshing-floor, and even a forge.

A very fine man, Ivan Ivanovitch ! He is very fond of melons : they are his favorite food. Just as soon as he has dined, and come out on his veranda, in his shirt, he orders

Gapka to fetch two melons, and immediately cuts them himself, collects the seeds in a paper, and begins to eat. Then he orders Gapka to fetch the ink-bottle, and, with his own hand, writes this inscription on the paper of seeds: *These melons were eaten on such and such a date.* If there was a guest present, then it reads, *Such and such a person assisted.*

The late judge of Mirgorod always gazed at Ivan Ivanovitch's house with pleasure. Yes, the little house was very pretty. It pleased me because sheds, and still other little sheds, were built on to it on all sides; so that, looking at it from a distance, only roofs were visible, rising one above another, which greatly resembled a plate full of pancakes, or, better still, fungi growing on the trunk of a tree. Moreover, the roofs were all overgrown with weeds: a willow, an oak, and two apple-trees leaned their spreading branches against it. Through the trees peeped little windows with carved and white-washed shutters, which projected even into the street.

A very fine man, Ivan Ivanovitch! The commissioner of Poltava knows him also.

Dorosh Tarasovitch Pukhívotchka, when he leaves Khorola, always goes to his house. And Father Peter, the Protopope who lives in Koliberda, when he invites a few guests, always says that he knows of no one who so well fulfils all his Christian duties, and understands so well how to live, as Ivan Ivanovitch.

How time flies! More than ten years have already passed since he became a widower. He never had any children. Gapka has children, and they run about the court-yard. Ivan Ivanovitch always gives each one of them either a round cake, or a slice of melon, or a pear.

Gapka carries the keys of his storerooms and cellars; but the key of the large chest which stands in his bedroom, and that of the centre storeroom, Ivan Ivanovitch keeps himself; and he does not like to admit any one. Gapka is a healthy girl, and goes about in coarse cloth garments with ruddy cheeks and calves.

And what a pious man is Ivan Ivanovitch! Every Sunday he dons his beksha, and goes to church. On entering, Ivan Ivanovitch bows on all sides, generally stations himself in the choir, and sings a very good bass. When the

service is over, Ivan Ivanovitch cannot refrain from passing the poor people in review. He probably would not have cared to undertake this tiresome work, if his natural goodness had not urged him to it. "Good-day, beggar!" he generally said, selecting the most crippled old woman in the most threadbare garment made of patches. "Whence come you, my poor woman?"

"I come from the farm, panotchka. 'Tis two days since I have eaten or drunk: my own children drove me out."

"Poor soul! why did you come hither?"

"To beg alms, panotchka, to see whether some one will not give at least enough for bread."

"Hm! so you want bread?" Ivan Ivanovitch generally inquired.

"How should I not want it? I am as hungry as a dog."

"Hm!" replied Ivan Ivanovitch usually, "and perhaps you would like butter too?"

"Yes; every thing which your kindness will give; I will be content with all."

"Hm! Is butter better than bread?"

“How is a hungry person to choose? Any thing you please, all is good.” Thereupon the old woman generally extended her hand.

“Well, go with God’s blessing,” said Ivan Ivanovitch. “Why do you stand there? I’m not beating you.” And turning to a second and a third with the same questions, he finally returns home, or goes to drink a little glass of vodka with his neighbor, Ivan Nikiforovitch, or the judge, or the chief of police.

Ivan Ivanovitch is very fond of receiving presents. This pleases him very much.

A very fine man also is Ivan Nikiforovitch. They are such friends as the world never saw. Anton Prokofievitch Pupopuz, who goes about to this hour in his cinnamon-colored surtout with blue sleeves, and dines every Sunday with the judge, was in the habit of saying that the Devil himself had bound Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch together with a rope: where one goes, the other follows.

Ivan Nikiforovitch was never married. Although it was reported that he was married, it was completely false. I know Ivan Nikiforovitch very well, and am able to state that he

*Questions & debates
passant but he
never nothing*

never even had any intention of marrying. Where do all these scandals originate? In the same way it was rumored that Ivan Nikiforovitch was born with a tail! But this invention is so clumsy, and at the same time so horrible and indecent, that I do not even consider it necessary to refute it for the benefit of civilized readers, to whom it is doubtless known that only witches, and very few even of those, have tails. Witches, moreover, belong more to the feminine than to the masculine gender.

In spite of their great friendship, these rare friends were not always agreed between themselves. Their characters can best be known by comparing them. Ivan Ivanovitch has the unusual gift of speaking in an extremely pleasant manner. Heavens! How he does speak! The feeling can best be described by comparing it to that which you experience when some one combs your head, or draws his finger softly across your heel. You listen and listen until you drop your head. Pleasant, exceedingly pleasant! like the sleep after a bath. Ivan Nikiforovitch, on the contrary, is more reticent; but, if he once takes up the word, look

out for yourself! He shaves better than any barber. Ivan Ivanovitch is tall and thin: Ivan Nikiforovitch is rather shorter in stature, but he makes it up in thickness. Ivan Ivanovitch's head is like a radish, tail down; Ivan Nikiforovitch's like a radish with the tail up. Ivan Ivanovitch lies on the veranda in his shirt after dinner only: in the evening he dons his beksha, and goes out somewhere, either to the village store, where he supplies flour, or into the fields to catch quail. Ivan Nikiforovitch lies all day on his porch: if the day is not too hot, he generally turns his back to the sun, and will not go anywhere. If it happens to occur to him in the morning, he walks through the yard, inspects the domestic affairs, and retires again to his room. In early days he used to go to Ivan Ivanovitch. Ivan Ivanovitch is a very refined man, and in polite conversation never utters an impolite word, and is offended at once if he hears one. Ivan Nikiforovitch is not always on his guard. On such occasions Ivan Ivanovitch usually rises from his seat, and says, "Enough, enough, Ivan Nikiforovitch! it's better to go out into the sun

at once, than to utter such godless words." Ivan Ivanovitch goes into a terrible rage if a fly falls into his beet-soup; then he is fairly beside himself; and he flings away his plate, and the housekeeper catches it. Ivan Nikiforovitch is exceedingly fond of bathing; and, when he gets up to the neck in water, he orders a table and a *samovar* to be placed on the water, and he is very fond of drinking tea in that cool position. Ivan Ivanovitch shaves his beard twice a week; Ivan Nikiforovitch, once. Ivan Ivanovitch is extremely curious. God preserve you if you begin to tell him any thing, and do not finish it! If he is displeased with any thing, he lets it be seen at once. It is very hard to tell from Ivan Nikiforovitch's countenance whether he is pleased or angry: even if he is rejoiced at any thing, he will not show it. Ivan Ivanovitch is of a rather timid character: Ivan Nikiforovitch, on the contrary, has such full folds in his trousers, that, if you were to inflate them, you might put the court-yard, with its storehouses and buildings, inside them. Ivan Ivanovitch has large, expressive eyes, of a snuff color, and a mouth shaped something like

the letter V: Ivan Nikiforovitch has small, yellowish eyes, quite concealed between heavy brows and fat cheeks; and his nose is the shape of a ripe plum. If Ivan Ivanovitch treats you to snuff, he always licks the cover of his box first with his tongue, then taps on it with his finger, and says, as he raises it, if you are an acquaintance, "Dare I beg you, sir, to give me the pleasure?" if a stranger, "Dare I beg you, sir, though I have not the honor of knowing your rank, name, and family, to do me the favor?" but Ivan Nikiforovitch puts his box straight into your hand, and merely adds, "Do me the favor." Neither Ivan Ivanovitch nor Ivan Nikiforovitch loves fleas; and therefore, neither Ivan Ivanovitch nor Ivan Nikiforovitch will, on any account, admit a Jew with his wares, without purchasing of him elixir in various little boxes, as remedies against these insects, having first rated him well for belonging to the Hebrew faith.

But, in spite of numerous dissimilarities, Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch are both very fine men.

II.

FROM WHICH MAY BE SEEN, WHAT IVAN IVANOVITCH WANTED, WHENCE AROSE THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN IVAN IVANOVITCH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH, AND WHERE IT ENDED.

ONE morning — it was in July — Ivan Ivanovitch was lying on his veranda. The day was warm: the air was dry, and came in gusts. Ivan Ivanovitch had been to town, to the mower's, and at the farm, and had succeeded in asking all the muzhiks and women whom he met, whence, whither, and why. He was fearfully tired, and had lain down to rest. As he lay there, he looked at the storehouses, the court-yard, the sheds, the chickens running about, and thought to himself, "My Heavens! What a master I am! What is there that I have not? Birds, buildings, granaries, every thing I take a fancy to; genuine distilled vodka; pears and plums in the orchard; poppies, cabbages, peas, in the garden; . . . what

is there which I have not? I should like to know what there is that I have not?"

As he put this profound question to himself, Ivan Ivanovitch reflected; and meantime, his eyes, in their search after fresh objects, crossed the fence into Ivan Nikiforovitch's yard, and involuntarily took note of a curious sight. A fat woman was bringing out clothes, which had been packed away, and spreading them out on the line to air. Presently an old uniform with worn trimmings was swinging its sleeves in the air, and embracing a brocade gown; from behind it peeped a court-coat, its buttons stamped with coats-of-arms, and with moth-eaten collar; white cassimere pantaloons with spots, which had once upon a time clothed Ivan Nikiforovitch's legs, and might now, possibly, fit his fingers. Behind them were speedily hung some more in the shape of the letter π . Then came a blue Cossack jacket, which Ivan Nikiforovitch had had made twenty years before, when he prepared to enter the militia, and allowed his mustache to grow. And finally, one after another, appeared a sword, projecting into the air like a spit; then the skirts of a grass-

green caftan-like garment, with copper buttons the size of a five-kopek piece, unfolded themselves. From among the folds peeped a vest bound with gold, with a wide opening in front. The vest was soon concealed by an old petticoat belonging to his dead grandmother, with pockets which would have held a watermelon. All these things piled together formed a very interesting spectacle for Ivan Ivanovitch: while the sun's rays, falling upon bits of a blue or green sleeve, a red binding, or a scrap of gold brocade, or playing on the point of the sword, formed an unusual sight, similar to the representations of the Nativity given at farmhouses by wandering bands; particularly that part where the throng of people, pressing close together, gaze at King Herod in his golden crown, or at Anthony leading his goat: at these exhibitions the fiddle whines, a gypsy taps on his lips in lieu of a drum, and the sun goes down, and the cool freshness of the young night presses more strongly on the shoulders and bosoms of the plump farmers' wives.

Presently the old woman crawled, grunting, from the storeroom, dragging after her an old-

fashioned saddle with broken stirrups, worn leather pistol-cases, and saddle-cloth, once red, with gilt embroidery and copper disks.

“Here’s a stupid woman,” thought Ivan Ivanovitch. “She’ll be dragging Ivan Nikiforovitch out and airing him next.”

And with reason: Ivan Ivanovitch was not so far wrong in his surmise. Five minutes later, Ivan Nikiforovitch’s nankeen trousers appeared, and took nearly half the yard to themselves. After that she fetched out a hat and a gun.

“What’s the meaning of this?” thought Ivan Ivanovitch. “I never saw Ivan Nikiforovitch have a gun. What does he want with it? Whether he shoots, or not, he keeps a gun! Of what use is it to him? But it’s a splendid thing. I have long wanted to get just such a one; I want that gun very much: I like to amuse myself with a gun. Hello, there, woman, woman!” shouted Ivan Ivanovitch, beckoning to her.

The old woman approached the fence.

“What’s that you have there, my good woman?”

The gun - aired out

HOW THE TWO IVANS QUARREL

"A gun, as you see."

"What sort of a gun?"

"Who knows what sort of a gun? If it were mine, perhaps I should know what it is made of; but it is my master's."

Ivan Ivanovitch rose, and began to examine the gun on all sides, and forgot to reprove the old woman for hanging it and the sword to air.

"It must be iron," went on the old woman.

"Hm! iron! why iron?" said Ivan Ivanovitch to himself. "Has your master had it long?"

"Yes; long, perhaps."

"It's a nice thing!" continued Ivan Ivanovitch. "I will ask him for it. What can he do with it? I'll exchange with him for it. Is your master at home, my good woman?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing? lying down?"

"Yes, lying down."

"Very well, I will come to him."

Ivan Ivanovitch dressed himself, took his well-seasoned stick for the benefit of the dogs (for, in Mirgorod, there are more dogs than people to be met in the street), and went out.

Although Ivan Nikiforovitch's house was next

THE TWO IVANS QUARRELLED.

an Ivanovitch's, so that you could have gone from one to the other by climbing the fence, yet Ivan Ivanovitch went by the street. From the street it was necessary to turn into an alley which was so narrow, that if two one-horse carts chanced to meet, they could not get out, and were forced to remain there, until the drivers, seizing the hind-wheels, dragged them in opposite directions into the street, and pedestrians drew aside like flowers growing by the fence on either hand. Ivan Ivanovitch's wagon-shed adjoined this alley on one side ; and on the other, Ivan Nikiforovitch's granary, gate, and pigeon-house. Ivan Ivanovitch went up to the gate, and rattled the latch. Within arose the barking of dogs ; but the motley-haired pack ran back, wagging their tails, when they saw the well-known face. Ivan Ivanovitch traversed the court-yard, in which were collected Indian doves fed by Ivan Nikiforovitch's own hand, water-melon, and melon-rinds, vegetables, broken wheels, barrel-hoops, or a wallowing small boy with dirty blouse, — a picture such as painters love. The shadows of the fluttering clothes covered nearly the whole of the yard, and lent

it a degree of coolness. The woman greeted him with an inclination, and stood, gaping, in one spot. The front of the house was adorned with a small porch, its roof supported on two oak pillars,—a welcome protection from the sun, which at that season in Little Russia loves not to jest, and bathes the pedestrian from head to foot in boiling perspiration. From this it may be judged how powerful was Ivan Ivanovitch's desire to obtain an indispensable article, when he made up his mind, at such an hour, to depart from his usual custom, which was to walk about only in the evening.

The room which Ivan Ivanovitch entered was quite dark, for the shutters were closed ; and the ray of sunlight falling through a hole made in the shutter, took on the colors of the rainbow, and, striking the opposite wall, sketched upon it a party-colored picture of the outlines of roofs, trees, and the clothes suspended in the yard, only upside down. This gave the room a peculiar half-light.

“God assist you !” said Ivan Ivanovitch.

“Ah ! how do you do, Ivan Ivanovitch ?” replied a voice from the corner of the room.

Then only did Ivan Ivanovitch perceive Ivan Nikiforovitch, lying upon a rug which was spread on the floor. "Excuse me for appearing before you in a state of nature."

"Not at all. You have been asleep to-day, Ivan Nikiforovitch?"

"I have been asleep. Have you been asleep, Ivan Ivanovitch?"

"I have."

"And now you have risen?"

"Now I have risen. Christ be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch! How can you sleep until this time? I have just come from the farm. There's very fine barley on the road, charming! and the hay is so tall and soft and golden!"

"Gorpina!" shouted Ivan Nikiforovitch, "fetch Ivan Ivanovitch some vodka, and some pastry and sour cream!"

"Fine weather, we're having to-day."

"Don't praise it, Ivan Ivanovitch! Devil take it! You can't get away from the heat."

"Now, why need you mention the Devil! Ah, Ivan Nikiforovitch! you will recall my words when it's too late. You will suffer in the next world for such godless words."

“How have I offended you, Ivan Ivanovitch? I have not attacked your father nor your mother. I don’t know how I have insulted you.”

“Enough, enough, Ivan Nikiforovitch!”

“By Heavens, Ivan Ivanovitch, I did not insult you!”

“It’s strange that the quails haven’t come yet to the whistle.”

“Think what you please, but I have not insulted you in any way.”

“I don’t know why they don’t come,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, as if he did not hear Ivan Nikiforovitch: “it is more than time for them already; . . . but they seem to need more time, for some reason.”

“You say that the barley is good?”

“Splendid barley, splendid!”

A silence ensued.

“So you are having your clothes aired, Ivan Nikiforovitch?” said Ivan Ivanovitch, at length.

“Yes: those cursed women have ruined some beautiful clothes; almost new, they were, too. Now I’m having them aired: the cloth is fine and handsome. They only need turning to make them fit to wear again.”

“One thing among them pleased me extremely, Ivan Nikiforovitch?”

“Which was that?”

“Tell me, please, what do you do with the gun that has been put to air with the clothes?” Here Ivan Ivanovitch offered his snuff. “May I ask you to do me the favor?”

“By no means! take it yourself: I will use my own.” Thereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch felt about him, and got hold of his snuff-box. “That stupid woman! So she hung the gun out to air. That Jew makes good snuff in Sorotchintzi. I don’t know what he puts into it, but it is so fragrant. It is a little like tansy. Here, take a little, and chew it: isn’t it like tansy?”

“Say, Ivan Nikiforovitch, I want to talk about that gun: what are you going to do with it? You don’t need it.”

“Why don’t I need it? I might want to shoot?”

“God be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch! When will you shoot? At the millennium, perhaps? So far as I know, or any one can recollect, you never killed even a duck: yes, and your nature was not so constructed that you can

shoot. You have a dignified bearing and figure: how are you to drag yourself about the marshes, when your garment, which it is not polite to mention in conversation by name, is being aired at this very moment? What then? No: you require rest, repose." (Ivan Ivanovitch, as has been hinted at above, employed uncommonly picturesque language when it was necessary to persuade any one. How he talked! Heavens, how he could talk!) "Yes, and you require polite actions. See here, give it to me!"

"The idea! The gun is valuable: you can't find such guns anywhere nowadays. I bought it of a Turk when I joined the militia; and now, to give it away all of a sudden! Impossible! It is an indispensable article."

"Indispensable for what?"

"For what? What if robbers should attack the house? . . . Indispensable indeed! Glory to God! now I am at ease, and fear no one. And why? Because I know that a gun stands in my storehouse."

"A fine gun that! Why, Ivan Nikiforovitch, the hammer is spoiled."

"What! how spoiled? It can be repaired:

all that needs to be done is to rub it with hemp-oil, so that it may not rust."

"I see in your words, Ivan Nikiforovitch, any thing but a friendly disposition towards me. You will do nothing for me in token of friendship."

"How can you say, Ivan Ivanovitch, that I show you no friendship? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Your oxen pasture on my steppes, and I have never interfered with them. When you go to Poltava, you always beg my wagon, and what then? Have I ever refused? Your children climb over the fence into my yard, and play with my dogs — I never say any thing; let them play, so long as they touch nothing; let them play!"

"If you won't give it to me, then let us exchange."

"What will you give me for it?" Thereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch raised himself on his elbow, and looked at Ivan Ivanovitch.

"I will give you my dark-brown sow, the one I have fed in the sty. A magnificent sow. You'll see, she'll bring you a litter of pigs next year."

“I do not see, Ivan Ivanovitch, how you can talk so. What could I do with your sow? Make a funeral dinner for the Devil?”

“Again! You can’t get along without the Devil! It’s a sin! by Heaven, it’s a sin, Ivan Nikiforovitch!”

“What do you mean, in fact, Ivan Ivanovitch, by giving, the deuce knows what, — a sow, — for my gun?”

“Why is she ‘the deuce knows what,’ Ivan Nikiforovitch?”

“Why? You can judge for yourself perfectly well: here’s the gun, a known thing; but the deuce knows what that sow is! If it had not been you who said it, Ivan Ivanovitch, I might have put an insulting construction on it.”

“What defect have you observed in the sow?”

“For what do you take me, in fact, — for a sow?” . . .

“Sit down, sit down! I won’t . . . No matter about your gun; let it rot and rust where it stands, in the corner of the storeroom. I don’t want to say any thing more about it!”

After this a pause ensued.

"They say," began Ivan Ivanovitch, "that three kings have declared war on our Tzar."

"Yes: Peter Feodorovitch told me. What sort of a war is this, and why?"

"I cannot say exactly, Ivan Nikiforovitch, what the cause is. I suppose the kings want us to adopt the Turkish faith."

"Fools! they would have it," said Ivan Nikiforovitch, raising his head.

"So, you see, our Tzar declared war on them in consequence. 'No,' says he, 'do you adopt the faith of Christ!'"

"What? Why, our people will beat them, Ivan Ivanovitch!"

"They will. So you won't swap the gun, Ivan Nikiforovitch?"

"It's a strange thing to me, Ivan Ivanovitch, that you, who seem to be a man distinguished for sense, should talk such nonsense. What a fool I should be!"

"Sit down, sit down. God be with it! let it burst! I won't mention it again."

At this moment, lunch was brought in.

Ivan Ivanovitch drank a glass, and ate a pie

with sour cream. "Listen, Ivan Nikiforovitch: I will give you, besides the sow, two sacks of oats; you did not sow any oats. You'll have to buy oats this year, in any case."

"By Heaven, Ivan Ivanovitch, I must tell you, you are very green! [This is nothing: Ivan Nikiforovitch does not even permit such phrases.] Who ever heard of swapping a gun for two sacks of oats? Never fear, you don't offer your coat."

"But you forget, Ivan Nikiforovitch, that I am to give you the sow too."

"What! two sacks of oats and a sow for a gun?"

"Why, is it too little?"

"For a gun?"

"Of course, for a gun."

"Two sacks for a gun?"

"Two sacks, not empty, but filled with oats; and you've forgotten the sow."

"Kiss your sow; and, if you don't like that, then go to the Evil One!"

"Oh, get angry now, do! See here: they'll stick your tongue full of red-hot needles in the other world, for such godless words. After a

conversation with you, one has to wash his face and hands, and fumigate himself."

"Permit me, Ivan Ivanovitch : my gun is a noble thing, the most curious toy ; and, besides, it is a very agreeable decoration in a room." . . .

"You go on like a fool about that gun of yours, Ivan Nikiforovitch," said Ivan Ivanovitch with vexation ; for he was beginning to be really angry.

"And you, Ivan Ivanovitch, are a regular *goose !*"

If Ivan Nikiforovitch had not uttered that word, then they would have quarrelled, but would have parted friends as usual ; but now things took quite another turn. Ivan Ivanovitch flew into a rage.

"What was that you said, Ivan Nikiforovitch ?" he asked, raising his voice.

"I said you were like a goose, Ivan Ivanovitch !"

"How dare you, sir, forgetful of decency, and the respect due a man's rank and family, insult him with such a disgraceful name !"

"What is there disgraceful about it ? And

why are you flourishing your hands so, Ivan Ivanovitch ?”

“How dared you, I repeat, in disregard of all decency, call me a goose ?”

“I spit on your head, Ivan Ivanovitch ! What are you screaming so for ?”

Ivan Ivanovitch could no longer control himself : his lips quivered ; his mouth lost its usual V shape, and became like the letter O ; he winked so that he was terrible to look at. This very rarely happened with Ivan Ivanovitch : it was necessary that he should be extremely angry first.

“Then, I declare to you,” exclaimed Ivan Ivanovitch, “that I will not know you !”

“A great pity ! By Heaven, I shall never cry on that account !” retorted Ivan Nikiforovitch. He lied, he lied, by Heaven, he lied ! it was very annoying to him.

“I will never put my foot inside your house again !”

“Oho, ho !” said Ivan Nikiforovitch, vexed, yet not knowing himself what to do, and rising to his feet, contrary to his custom. “Hey, there, woman, boy !” Thereupon, there ap-

peared at the door the same fat woman, and small boy, enveloped in a long and wide surtout. "Take Ivan Ivanovitch by the arms, and lead him to the door!"

"What! a nobleman?" shouted Ivan Ivanovitch with a feeling of vexation and dignity. "Just do it if you dare! Come on! I'll annihilate you and your stupid master. The crow won't be able to find your bones." (Ivan Ivanovitch spoke with uncommon force when his spirit was up.)

The group presented a striking picture: Ivan Nikiforovitch standing in the middle of the room; the woman with her mouth wide open, and the most senseless, terrified look on her face; Ivan Ivanovitch with uplifted hand, as the Roman tribunes are depicted. This was an extraordinary moment, a magnificent spectacle: and yet there was but one spectator; this was the boy in the extensive surtout, who stood quite quietly, and picked his nose with his finger.

Finally Ivan Ivanovitch took his hat. "You have behaved well, Ivan Nikiforovitch, extremely well! I shall remember it."

“Go, Ivan Ivanovitch, go! and see that you don’t come in my way: if you do, I’ll beat your ugly face to a jelly, Ivan Ivanovitch!”

“Take that, Ivan Nikiforovitch!” retorted Ivan Ivanovitch, making an insulting gesture, and banged the door, which squeaked and flew open behind him.

Ivan Nikiforovitch appeared at the door, and wanted to add something more; but Ivan Ivanovitch did not glance back, and hastened from the yard.

III.

WHAT TOOK PLACE AFTER IVAN IVANOVITCH'S
QUARREL WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH.

AND thus two respectable men, the pride and honor of Mirgorod, had quarrelled, and about what? About a bit of nonsense, — a goose. They would not see each other, broke off all connection, while hitherto they had been known as the most inseparable friends. Every day Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch had sent to inquire about each other's health, and often conversed together from their balconies, and said such charming things as it did the heart good to listen to. On Sundays, Ivan Ivanovitch, in his lambskin bekesh, and Ivan Nikiforovitch, in his yellowish cinnamon-colored nankeen casakin, used to set out for church almost arm in arm; and if Ivan Ivanovitch, who had remarkably sharp eyes, was the first to catch sight of a puddle or any dirt in the street, which sometimes happened in Mirgorod, he

always said to Ivan Nikiforovitch, "Look out! don't put your foot there, it's dirty." Ivan Nikiforovitch, on his side, exhibited the same touching tokens of friendship; and wherever he chanced to be standing, he always held out his hand to Ivan Ivanovitch with his snuff-box, saying, "Do me the favor!" And what fine managers both were! . . . And these two friends . . . When I heard of it, it struck me like a flash of lightning. For a long time I would not believe it. Ivan Ivanovitch had quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovitch! Such worthy people! What is to be depended upon, then, in this world?

When Ivan Ivanovitch reached home, he remained long in a state of strong excitement. He usually went, first of all, to the stable, to see whether his mare was eating her hay (Ivan Ivanovitch had a bay mare, with a white star on her forehead: a very pretty little mare she was too), then to feed the turkeys and little pigs with his own hand, and then to his room, where he either made wooden dishes (he could make various vessels of wood very tastefully, quite as well as any turner), or read a book

printed by Liubia, Garia and Popoff (Ivan Ivanovitch never could remember the name, because the serving-maid had long before torn off the top part of the titlepage while amusing the children), or rested on the veranda. But now he did not betake himself to any of his ordinary occupations. Instead, on encountering Gapka, he began to scold because she was loitering about without any occupation, though she was carrying groats to the kitchen ; flung a stick at a cock which came upon the veranda for his customary 'treat ; and when the dirty little boy, in his little torn blouse, ran up to him, and shouted, "Papa, papa ! give me a honey-cake," he threatened him and stamped at him so fiercely that the frightened child fled, God knows whither.

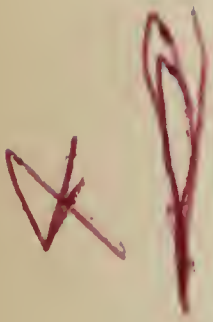
But at last he bethought himself, and began to busy himself with his every-day duties. He dined late, and it was almost night when he lay down to rest on the veranda. A good beet-soup with pigeons, which Gapka cooked for him, quite drove from his mind the occurrences of the morning. Again Ivan Ivanovitch began to gaze at his belongings with satisfaction : at

length his eye rested on the neighboring yard; and he said to himself, "I have not been to Ivan Nikiforovitch's to-day: I'll go there now." So saying, Ivan Ivanovitch took his stick and his hat, and directed his steps to the street; but scarcely had he passed through the gate, when he recollected the quarrel, spit, and turned back. Almost the same thing happened at Ivan Nikiforovitch's house. Ivan Ivanovitch saw the woman put her foot on the fence, with the intention of climbing over into his yard, when suddenly Ivan Nikiforovitch's voice became audible. "Back! back! it won't do!" But Ivan Ivanovitch found it very tiresome. It is quite possible that these worthy men would have made peace next day, if a certain occurrence in Ivan Ivanovitch's house had not destroyed all hopes, and poured oil upon the fire of enmity which was ready to die out.

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On the evening of that very day, Agafya Fedosyevna arrived at Ivan Nikiforovitch's. Agafya Fedosyevna was not Ivan Nikiforovitch's relative, nor his sister-in-law, nor even

his fellow-godparent. There seemed to be no reason why she should come to him, and he was not particularly glad of her company; still, she came, and lived on him for weeks at a time, and even longer. Then she took possession of the keys, and took the whole house into her own hands. This was extremely displeasing to Ivan Nikiforovitch; but he, to his amazement, minded her like a child; and although he occasionally attempted to dispute, yet Agafya Fedosyevna always got the better of him.



I must confess that I do not understand why things are so arranged, that women seize us by the nose as deftly as they do the handle of a teapot: either their hands are so constructed, or else our noses are good for nothing else. And notwithstanding the fact that Ivan Nikiforovitch's nose somewhat resembled a plum, she grasped that nose, and led him about after her like a dog. He even, in her presence, involuntarily altered his ordinary manner of life.

Agafya Fedosyevna wore a cap on her head, three warts on her nose, and a coffee-colored cloak with yellow flowers. Her figure was like a cask, and it would have been as hard to tell

where to look for her waist, as for her to see her nose without a mirror. Her feet were small, and formed in the shape of two cushions. She talked scandal, and ate boiled beet-soup in the morning, and swore extremely well; and amidst all these various occupations, her countenance never for one instant changed its expression, which phenomenon, as a rule, women alone are capable of displaying.

Just as soon as she arrived, every thing went wrong side before. "Ivan Nikiforovitch, don't you make peace with him, nor ask his forgiveness; he wants to ruin you; that's the kind of man he is! you don't know him yet!" that cursed woman whispered and whispered, and managed so that Ivan Nikiforovitch would not even hear Ivan Ivanovitch mentioned.

All assumed another aspect. If his neighbor's dog ran into the yard, it was beaten within an inch of its life; the children, who climbed over the fence, were sent back with howls, their little shirts stripped up, and marks of a switch behind; even the woman, when Ivan Ivanovitch undertook to ask her about something, did something so insulting, that Ivan

Ivanovitch, being an extremely delicate man, only spit, and muttered, "What a nasty woman! even worse than her master!"

Finally, as a climax to all the insults, his hated neighbor built a goose-coop right against his fence where they usually climbed over, as if with the express intention of redoubling the insult. This coop, so hateful to Ivan Ivanovitch, was constructed with diabolical swiftness, — in one day.

This aroused wrath and a desire for revenge in Ivan Ivanovitch. Nevertheless, he showed no signs of bitterness, in spite of the fact that the coop trespassed on his land; but his heart beat so violently, that it was extremely difficult for him to preserve this calm appearance.

He passed through the day in this manner. Night came. . . . Oh, if I were a painter, how magnificently I would depict the night's charms! I would describe how all Mirgorod sleeps; how steadily the myriads of stars gaze down upon it; how the apparent quiet is filled far and near with the barking of dogs; how the love-sick sacristan steals past them, and scales the fence with knightly fearlessness; how the white

walls of the houses, bathed in the moonlight, grow whiter still, the overhanging trees darker; how the shadows of the trees fall blacker, the flowers and the silent grass become more fragrant, and the crickets, unharmonious cavaliers of the night, strike up their rattling song in friendly fashion on all sides. I would describe how, in one of these little, low-roofed, clay houses, the black-browed village maid, tossing on her lonely couch, dreams with heaving bosom of hussar's spurs and mustache, and how the moonlight smiles upon her cheeks. I would describe how the black shadows of the bats flit along the white road, before they alight upon the white chimneys of the cottages. . . . But it would hardly be within my power to depict Ivan Ivanovitch, as he crept out that night, saw in hand; and the various emotions written on his countenance! Quietly, so quietly, he crawled along, and climbed upon the goose-coop. Ivan Nikiforovitch's dogs knew nothing, as yet, of the quarrel between them; and so they permitted him, as an old friend, to enter the coop, which rested upon four oaken posts. Creeping up to the nearest post, he applied his

saw, and began to cut. The noise produced by the saw caused him to glance about him every moment, but the recollection of the insult refreshed his courage. The first post was sawed through. Ivan Ivanovitch began upon the next. His eyes burned, and he saw nothing for terror. All at once Ivan Ivanovitch uttered an exclamation, and became petrified with fear: a dead man appeared to him; but he speedily recovered himself on perceiving that it was a goose, thrusting its neck out at him. Ivan Ivanovitch spit with vexation, and proceeded with his work: and the second post was sawed through; the building trembled. Ivan Ivanovitch's heart beat so violently, when he began on the third, that he had to stop several times. The post was more than half sawed through, when the frail building quivered violently. . . .

Ivan Ivanovitch had barely time to spring back when it tumbled down with a crash. Seizing his saw, he ran home in the greatest terror, and flung himself upon his bed, without having sufficient courage to peep from the window at the consequences of his terrible deed. It seemed to him as though Ivan Nikiforovitch's

entire household assembled: the old woman, Ivan Nikiforovitch, the boy in the endless surtout, all with sticks, . . . led by Agafya Fedosyevna, were coming to tear down and destroy his house.

Ivan Ivanovitch passed the whole of the following day in a perfect fever. It seemed to him that his detested neighbor would set fire to his house at least, in revenge for this; and so he gave orders to Gapka to look everywhere constantly, and see whether dry straw were laid against it anywhere. Finally, in order to forestall Ivan Nikiforovitch, he determined to run ahead, like a hare, and enter a complaint against him before the district judge of Mirgorod. In what it consisted, can be learned from the following chapter.

*He saw down
the goose coop.*

IV.

WHAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE DISTRICT JUDGE
OF MIRGOROD.

A WONDERFUL town is Mirgorod! How many buildings are there under straw, rush, and even wooden roofs! On the right is a street, on the left a street, and fine fences everywhere: over them twine hop-vines, upon them hang pots; from behind them the sun-flowers show their sun-like heads, poppies blush, fat pumpkins peep, . . . luxury itself! The fence is always garnished with articles which render it still more picturesque: women's wide-spread undergarments of checked woollen stuff, shirts or trousers. There is no such thing as theft or rascality in Mirgorod, so everybody hangs upon his fence whatever strikes his fancy. If you will go to the square, you will surely stop and admire the view: a puddle, such a wonderful puddle, is there! the only one you ever saw. It occupies nearly the whole of the

square. A truly magnificent puddle! The houses and cottages, which at a distance might be mistaken for hay-ricks, stand around it, lost in admiration of its beauty.

But I agree with those who think that there is no better house than that of the district judge. Whether it is of oak or birch, is nothing to the point; but it has, my dear sirs, eight windows! eight windows in a row, directly on the square, and upon that watery expanse, which I have just mentioned, and which the chief of police calls a lake. It alone is painted the color of granite. All the other houses in Mirgorod are merely whitewashed. Its roof is all of wood, and would have been even painted red, had not the government clerks eaten the oil which had been prepared for that purpose, having flavored it with garlic, as it happened, as if expressly, during a fast; and so the roof remained unpainted. Towards the square projects a porch, which the chickens frequently visit, because that porch is nearly always strewn with grain or some edible, not intentionally, but through the carelessness of visitors. The house is divided into two parts: one part is the court-

room; the other, the jail. In the half which contains the court-room are two neat, white-washed rooms, — one, the front one, for clients, the other containing a table adorned with ink-spots; upon the table is a looking-glass; there are four oak chairs with tall backs; along the wall stand iron-bound chests, in which are preserved bundles of district law-suit papers. Upon one of the chests stood at that time a pair of boots, polished with wax.

The court had been open since morning. The judge, a pretty large man, though thinner than Ivan Nikiforovitch, with a good-natured face, a greasy dressing-gown, a pipe, and a cup of tea, was conversing with the clerk of the court.

The judge's lips were directly under his nose, so that he could snuff his upper lip as much as he liked. This lip served him instead of a snuff box, for the snuff intended for his nose almost always lodged upon it. So the judge was talking with the assistant. A barefooted girl held a tray with cups on one side of them. At the end of the table, the secretary was reading the decision in some case, but in such a mourn-

ful and monotonous voice, that the condemned man himself would have fallen asleep while listening to it. The judge, no doubt, would have been the first of all to do so, had he not entered into an engrossing conversation while it was going on.

“I expressly tried to find out,” said the judge, sipping his tea from the already cold cup, “how they manage to sing so well. I had a splendid thrush two years ago. Well, all of a sudden he was completely spoiled, and began to sing, God knows what: he got worse, and worse, and worse, as time went on; he began to rattle and get hoarse, — just good for nothing! And it’s all nonsense! this is why it happened: a little lump, not so big as a pea, came under his throat. It was only necessary to prick that little swelling with a needle. Zachar Prokofievitch taught me that; and, if you like, I’ll tell you just how it was. I go to him” . . .

“Shall I read another, Demyan Demyanovitch?” broke in the secretary, who had not been reading for several minutes.

“Have you finished already? Just think how quick! And I did not hear a word of it!

Where is it? Give it here, and I'll sign it. What else have you there?"

"The case of Cossack Bokítok for stealing a cow."

"Very good; read it! Yes, so I go to him. . . . I can even tell you in detail how he entertained me. There was vodka and dried sturgeon, excellent! Yes, not our sturgeon" (here the judge smacked his tongue, and smiled, upon which his nose took a snuff at its usual snuff-box), "such as our Mirgorod shops furnish us. I ate no herrings, for, as you know, they give me heart-burn; but I tasted the caviare, — very fine caviare! There's no doubt about it, excellent. Then I drank some peach-brandy, real gentian. There was saffron-brandy too; but, as you know, I never take that. You see, it was very good. In the first place, to whet your appetite, as they say, and then to satisfy it . . . Ah! speak of an angel" . . . exclaimed the judge, all at once, catching sight of Ivan Ivanovitch as he entered.

"God be with us! I wish you a good-morning," said Ivan Ivanovitch, bowing all round with his usual politeness. My God! how well

he understood the art of fascinating everybody with all his ways ! I never beheld such refinement. He knew his own worth quite well, and therefore looked for universal respect as his due. The judge himself handed Ivan Ivanovitch a chair ; and his nose inhaled all the snuff from his upper lip, which, with him, was always a sign of great pleasure.

“What will you take, Ivan Ivanovitch ?” he inquired : “will you have a cup of tea ?”

“No, much obliged,” replied Ivan Ivanovitch, bowed and seated himself.

“Do me the favor, — one little cup,” repeated the judge.

“No, thank you ; much obliged for your hospitality,” replied Ivan Ivanovitch, and rose, bowed, and sat down.

“Just one little cup,” repeated the judge.

“No, do not trouble yourself, Demyan Demyanovitch.” Whereupon Ivan Ivanovitch again rose, bowed, and sat down.

“A little cup !”

“Very well, then, just a little cup,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, and reached out his hand to the tray.

My Heavens ! What a depth of refinement

there was in that man! It is impossible to describe what a pleasant impression such manners produce!

“Will you not have another cup?”

“I thank you sincerely,” answered Ivan Ivanovitch, turning his cup upside down upon the tray, and bowing.

“Do me the favor, Ivan Ivanovitch.”

“I cannot; much obliged.” Thereupon Ivan Ivanovitch bowed, and sat down.

“Ivan Ivanovitch, for the sake of our friendship, just one little cup!”

“No: I am extremely indebted for your hospitality.” So saying, Ivan Ivanovitch bowed, and seated himself.

“Only a cup, one little cup!”

Ivan Ivanovitch put out his hand to the tray, and took a cup.

Oh, the deuce! How, how can a man contrive to support his dignity!

“Demyan Demyanovitch,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, swallowing the last mouthful, “I have pressing business with you: I want to enter a complaint.”

Then Ivan Ivanovitch set down his cup, and

drew from his pocket a sheet of stamped paper, written over. "A complaint against my enemy, my sworn enemy."

"And who is that?"

"Ivan Nikiforovitch Dovgotchkhun."

At these words, the judge nearly fell off his chair. "What do you say?" he exclaimed, clasping his hands: "Ivan Ivanovitch, is this you?"

"You see yourself, that it is I."

"The Lord and all the saints be with you! What! You! Ivan Ivanovitch! you have fallen out with Ivan Nikiforovitch! Is it your mouth which says that? Repeat it! Is not some one hid behind you, who is speaking instead of you?"

"What is there incredible about it? I can't endure the sight of him: he has done me a deadly injury, — he has insulted my honor."

"Holy Trinity! How am I to believe my mother now? Why, every day, when I quarrel with my sister, the old woman says, 'Children, you live together like dogs. If you would only take pattern by Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch, they are friends indeed! such friends!'"

such worthy people!’ There you are with your friend! Tell me what this is about. How is it?”

“It is a delicate business, Demyan Demyanovitch; it is impossible to relate it in words: be pleased rather to read my petition. Here, take it by this side: it is more convenient.”

“Read it, Taras Tikhonovitch,” said the judge, turning to the secretary. Taras Tikhonovitch took the petition; and blowing his nose, as all district judges’ secretaries blow their noses, with the assistance of two fingers, he began to read:—

“From the nobleman and landed proprietor of the Mirgorod District, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, a petition: concerning which the following points are to be observed:—

“1. Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor, nobleman, known to all the world for his godless acts, which inspire disgust, and in lawlessness exceed all bounds, on the seventh day of July of this year 1810, conferred upon me a deadly insult, as touching my personal honor, and likewise as tending to the humiliation and confusion of my rank and family. The said nobleman, of

77, 1810

repulsive aspect, has also a pugnacious disposition, and is full to overflowing of various sorts of blasphemy and quarrelsome words." . . .

Here the reader paused for an instant, to blow his nose again ; but the judge folded his hands in approbation, and murmured to himself, "What a ready pen ! Lord ! how that man does write !"

Ivan Ivanovitch requested that the reading might proceed, and Taras Tikhonovitch went on : —

"The said Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Niki-for, when I went to him with a friendly proposition, called me publicly by an epithet insulting and injurious to my honor, namely, a *goose*, whereas it is known to the whole district of Mirgorod, that I never was named after that disgusting animal, and have no intention of ever being named after it. And the proof of my noble extraction is, that, in the baptismal register to be found in the Church of the Three Bishops, the day of my birth, and likewise the fact of my baptism, are inscribed. But a goose, as is well known to every one who has any knowledge of science, cannot be inscribed in

goose can not be

the baptismal register; for a goose is not a man, but a fowl; which, likewise, is sufficiently well known, even to persons who have not been to a seminary. But the said evil-minded nobleman, being privy to all these facts, for no other purpose than to offer a deadly insult to my rank and calling, affronted me with the aforesaid foul word.

“2. And the same impolite and indecent nobleman, moreover, attempted injury to my property, inherited by me from my father, a member of the clerical profession, Ivan Pere-répenko, son of Onisieff, of blessed memory, in that he, contrary to all law, transported directly opposite my porch, a goose-coop, which was done with no other intention than to emphasize the insult offered me; for the said coop had, up to that time, stood in a very good situation, and was still sufficiently strong. But the loathsome intention of the aforesaid nobleman consisted simply in this: viz., in making me a witness of unpleasant occurrences; for it is well known, that no man goes into a coop, much less into a goose-coop, for polite purposes. In the commission of his lawless deed,

the two front posts trespassed on my land, received by me during the lifetime of my father, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Onisieff, of blessed memory, beginning at the granary, thence in a straight line to the spot where the women wash the pots.

“3. The above-described nobleman, whose very name and surname inspire thorough disgust, cherishes in his mind a malicious design to burn me in my own house. Which the infallible signs, hereinafter mentioned, fully demonstrate: in the first place, the said wicked nobleman has begun to emerge frequently from his apartments, which he never did formerly on account of his laziness and the disgusting corpulence of his body; in the second place, in his servants' apartments, adjoining the fence, surrounding my own land, received by me from my father, of blessed memory, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Onisieff, a light burns every day, and for a remarkably long period of time, which is also a clear proof of the fact. For hitherto, owing to his repulsive niggardliness, not only the tallow-candle, but also the grease-lamp, has been extinguished.

“And therefore I pray that the said nobleman, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Ivan, being plainly guilty of incendiarism, of insult to my rank, name, and family, and of illegal appropriation of my property, and, worse than all else, of malicious and deliberate addition to my surname, of the nickname of 'goose,' be condemned by the court, to fine, satisfaction, costs, and damages, and that the aforesaid be put in irons as a criminal, and, being chained, be removed to the town jail, and that judgment be rendered upon this, my petition, immediately and without delay.

“Written and composed by Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, nobleman, and landed proprietor of Mirgorod.”

After the reading of the petition was concluded, the judge approached Ivan Ivanovitch, took him by the button, and began to talk to him after this fashion. “What are you doing, Ivan Ivanovitch? Fear God! throw away that petition, let it go! may Satan carry it off! Better take Ivan Nikiforovitch by the hand, and kiss him, and buy some Santurinski or Nikopolski liquor, simply make a punch, and call

me. We will drink it up together, and forget all."

"No, Demyan Demyanovitch ! it's not that sort of an affair," said Ivan Ivanovitch, with the dignity which always became him so well : "it is not an affair which can be arranged by a friendly agreement. Farewell ! Good-day to you also, gentlemen," he continued with the same dignity, turning to them all. "I hope that my petition will give rise to the proper action ;" and out he went, leaving all present in a state of stupefaction.

The judge sat down without uttering a word ; the secretary took a pinch of snuff ; the clerks upset some broken fragments of bottles which served for inkstands ; and the judge himself, in absence of mind, spread out a puddle of ink upon the table with his finger.

"What do you say to this, Dorofei Trofimovitch ?" said the judge, turning to the assistant after a pause.

"I've nothing to say," replied the clerk.

"What things do go on !" continued the judge. He had not finished saying this, when the door creaked, and the front half of Ivan

Nikiforovitch presented itself in the court-room : the rest of him remained in the ante-room. The appearance of Ivan Nikiforovitch, and in court, too, seemed so extraordinary, that the judge screamed ; the secretary stopped reading ; and one clerk, in his frieze imitation of a dress-coat, took his pen in his lips ; and the other swallowed a fly ; even the constable on service, and the watchman, a discharged soldier, who up to that moment had stood by the door scratching about his dirty blouse, with its chevrons of merit on the shoulder, even this invalid dropped his jaw, and trod on some one's foot.

“ What chance brings you here ? What and how ? How is your health, Ivan Nikiforovitch ? ”

But Ivan Nikiforovitch was neither dead nor alive ; for he was stuck fast in the door, and could not take a step either forwards or backwards. In vain did the judge shout into the ante-room that some one there should push Ivan Nikiforovitch forward into the court-room. In the ante-room was only one old woman with a petition, who, in spite of all the efforts

of her bony hands, could accomplish nothing. Then one of the clerks, with thick lips, wide shoulders, and a thick nose, with eyes which looked askance and intoxicated, and with ragged elbows, approached the front half of Ivan Nikiforovitch, crossed his hands for him as though he had been a child, and winked at the old soldier, who braced his knee against Ivan Nikiforovitch's belly, and, in spite of the latter's piteous moans, he was squeezed out into the ante-room. Then they pulled the bolts, and opened the other half of the door. Meanwhile the clerk and his assistant, the soldier, breathing hard with their friendly exertions, exhaled such a strong odor that the courtroom seemed temporarily converted into a drinking-room.

"Did you hurt yourself, Ivan Nikiforovitch? I will tell my mother to send you a decoction of brandy, with which you need but to rub your back and stomach, and all your bad feelings will disappear."

But Ivan Nikiforovitch dropped into a chair, and could utter no word beyond prolonged *oh's*. Finally, in a voice feeble and barely audible

from fatigue, he exclaimed, "Wouldn't you like some?" and, drawing his snuff-box from his pocket, he added, "Help yourself, if you please."

"Very glad to see you," replied the judge; "but I cannot conceive what made you put yourself to so much trouble, and favor us with so unexpected an honor."

"A petition!" . . . Ivan Nikiforovitch managed to ejaculate.

"A petition? What petition?"

"A complaint" . . . (here the asthma entailed a prolonged pause) — "Oh! — a complaint against the rascal — Ivan Ivanovitch Pererépenko!"

"And you too! Such particular friends! A complaint against such a benevolent man!"

"He's Satan himself!" ejaculated Ivan Nikiforovitch abruptly.

The judge crossed himself.

"Take my petition, and read it."

"There is nothing to be done. Read it, Taras Tikhonovitch," said the judge, turning to the secretary with an expression of displeasure, which caused his nose to sniff at his upper lip,

which generally occurred only as a sign of great enjoyment. This independence on the part of his nose caused the judge still greater vexation. He pulled out his handkerchief, and rubbed off all the snuff from his upper lip, in order to punish it for its daring.

The secretary, having gone through his usual performance, which he always indulged in before he began to read, — that is to say, without the aid of a pocket-handkerchief, — began in his ordinary voice, in the following manner : —

“ Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikofof, nobleman of the Mirgorod District, offers a petition, and begs attention to the following points : —

“ 1. Through his hateful malice, and plainly manifested ill will, the person calling himself a nobleman, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, commits against me every manner of injury, damage, and other spiteful deeds, which inspire me with terror ; and yesterday at afternoon, like a brigand and a thief, with axes, saws, chisels, and various locksmith’s tools, he came by night into my yard, and into my own goose-coop located within it, and with his own hand, and in outrageous manner, destroyed it ; for which

very illegal and burglarious deed, on my side I gave no manner of cause.

murder "2. The same nobleman Pererépenko has designs upon my life; and on the 7th of last month, cherishing this design in secret, he came to me, and began, in a friendly and sly manner, to demand of me a gun which was in my chamber, and offered me for it, with the miserliness peculiar to him, many worthless objects, such as a brown sow and two sacks of oats. But, divining at that time his criminal intentions, I endeavored in every way to dissuade him from it; but the said rascal and scoundrel, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, abused me like a muzhik, and since that time has cherished against me an irreconcilable enmity. His sister was well known to all the world as a loose character, and went off with a regiment of chasseurs which was stationed at Mirgorod, five years ago; but she inscribed her husband as a peasant. His father and mother also were not law-abiding people, and both were inconceivable drunkards. The afore-mentioned nobleman and robber Pererépenko, in his beastly and blameworthy actions, goes beyond all

his family, and under the guise of piety does the most immoral things. He does not observe the fasts; for on the eve of St. Philip's this atheist bought a sheep, and the next day he ordered his mistress, Gapka, to kill it, alleging that he needed tallow for lamps and candles at once.

"Therefore I pray that the said nobleman, a manifest robber, church-thief, rascal, convicted of plundering and stealing, may be put in irons, and confined in the jail or the government prison, and there, under supervision, deprived of his rank and nobility, he may be well flogged by barbarians, and banished to forced labor in Siberia for cause, and that he may be commanded to pay damages, losses, and that judgment may be rendered on this my petition.

"To this petition, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikofof, noble of the Mirgorod District, has set his hand."

As soon as the secretary had finished reading, Ivan Nikiforovitch seized his hat, and bowed, with the intention of departing.

"Where are you going, Ivan Nikiforovitch?" the judge called after him. "Sit yet a little

while. Drink some tea. Orishko, why are you standing there, you stupid girl, winking at the clerks? Go, bring tea."

But Ivan Nikiforovitch, in terror at having got so far from home, and at having undergone such a fearful quarantine, made haste to crawl through the door, saying, "Don't trouble yourself. It is with pleasure that I" — and closed it after him, leaving all present stupefied.

There was nothing to be done. Both petitions were entered; and the affair promised to assume a sufficiently serious aspect, when an unforeseen occurrence gave an added interest to it. As the judge was leaving the court, in company with the clerk and secretary, and the employees were thrusting into sacks the fowls, eggs, chunks of bread, pies, cracknels, and other odds and ends brought by plaintiffs, — just at that moment a brown sow rushed into the room, and snatched, to the amazement of the spectators, neither a pie nor a crust of bread, but Ivan Nikiforovitch's petition, which lay on the end of the table, with its leaves hanging over. Having seized the document, mistress sow ran off so briskly that not one of the clerks

or officials could catch her, in spite of the rulers and ink-bottles they hurled after her.

This extraordinary occurrence produced a terrible muddle, for there had not even a copy been taken of the petition. The judge — that is to say, his secretary — and the assistant debated for a long time upon such an unheard-of affair. Finally it was decided to write a report of the matter to the prefect, as the investigation of the matter pertained more to the department of the city police. Report No. 389 was despatched to him that same day; and also upon that day there came to light a sufficiently curious explanation, which the reader can learn from the following chapter.

V.

IN WHICH ARE DETAILED THE DELIBERATIONS
OF TWO IMPORTANT PERSONAGES OF MIRGOROD.

As soon as Ivan Ivanovitch had arranged his domestic affairs, and stepped out upon the veranda, according to his custom, to lie down, then, to his indescribable amazement, he saw something red at the gate. This was the red facings of the chief of police's coat, which were polished equally with his collar, and had turned on the edges into varnished leather. Ivan Ivanovitch thought to himself, "It's not bad that Peter Fedorovitch has come to talk it over." But he was very much surprised to see that the chief was walking remarkably fast, and flourishing his hands, which very rarely happened with him. There were eight buttons planted about on the chief of police's uniform: the ninth, torn off in some manner during the procession at the consecration of the church two years before, the *desyatskie* had not been

able to find up to this time ; although the chief, on the occasion of the daily reports made to him by the sergeants of police, always asked, "Has that button been found?" These eight buttons were strewn about him as women sow beans, — one to the right, and one to the left. His left foot had been struck by a ball in the last campaign, and therefore he limped, and threw it out so far to one side as to almost counteract the efforts of the right foot. The more briskly the chief of police worked his walking apparatus, the less progress it made in advance ; and so, while the chief was getting to the veranda, Ivan Ivanovitch had plenty of time to lose himself in surmises as to why the chief was flourishing his hands so vigorously. This interested him the more, as the matter seemed one of unusual importance ; for the chief had on a new dagger.

"Good-morning, Peter Feodorovitch !" cried Ivan Ivanovitch, who was, as has already been stated, exceedingly curious, and could not restrain his impatience at the sight as the chief of police began to ascend to the veranda, yet never raised his eyes, and scolded at his foot,

which could not be persuaded to mount the step at only one flourish.

“I wish my good friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, a good-day,” replied the chief.

“Pray sit down. I see that you are weary, as your lame foot hinders ” . . .

“My foot!” screamed the chief, bestowing upon Ivan Ivanovitch a glance such as a giant might cast upon a pygmy, a pedant upon a dancing-master: thereupon he stretched out his foot, and stamped upon the floor with it. But this boldness cost him dear; for his whole body wavered, and his nose struck the railing; but the brave preserver of order, with the purpose of making light of it, righted himself immediately, and began to feel in his pocket as if to get his snuff-box. “I must report to you, my dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, that never in all my days have I made such a march. Yes, seriously. For instance, during the campaign of 1807. . . . Ah! I will relate to you in what manner I crawled through the enclosure to see a pretty little German.” Here the chief closed one eye, and executed a diabolically sly smile.

“Where have you been to-day?” asked Ivan Ivanovitch, wishing to cut the chief short, and bring him more speedily to the object of his visit. He would have very much liked to inquire what the chief meant to tell him, but his extensive knowledge of the world showed him all the impropriety of such a question; and so Ivan Ivanovitch had to keep himself well in hand, and await a solution, his heart, meanwhile, beating with unusual force.

“Ah, excuse me! I was going to tell you — where was I?” answered the chief of police. “In the first place, I report that the weather is fine to-day” . . .

At these last words, Ivan Ivanovitch nearly died.

“But permit me,” went on the chief. “I came to you to-day about a very important affair.” Here the chief’s face and bearing assumed the same careworn guise with which he had ascended to the veranda. Ivan Ivanovitch lived again, and shook as if in a fever, omitting not, as was his habit, to put a question. “What is the important matter? Is it important?”

“Pray judge for yourself: first I venture to report to you, dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, that you . . . I beg you to observe that, for my own part, I should have nothing to say; but the rules of government require it . . . you have transgressed the rules of propriety.”

“What do you say, Peter Feodorovitch? I don’t understand at all.”

“Pardon me, Ivan Ivanovitch! how is it that you do not understand? Your own beast has destroyed a very important government document; and you can still say, after that, that you do not understand!”

“What beast?”

“Your own brown sow, with your permission, be it said.”

“How am I responsible? Why did the janitor of the court open the door?”

“But, Ivan Ivanovitch, your own brown sow. You must be responsible.”

“I am extremely obliged to you for comparing me to a sow.”

“But I did not say that, Ivan Ivanovitch! By Heavens! I did not say it! Pray judge from your own clear conscience. It is known

to you without doubt, that, in accordance with the views of the government, unclean animals are forbidden to roam about the city, particularly in the principal streets. Confess, now, that it is prohibited."

"God knows what you are talking about! A mighty important business, that a sow got into the street!"

"Permit me to inform you, Ivan Ivanovitch, permit me, permit me, that this is utterly impossible. What is to be done? The authorities command, we must obey. I don't deny, that sometimes chickens and geese run about the streets, and even about the square, — pray observe, chickens and geese; but only last year, I gave orders that pigs and goats were not to be admitted to the public squares, which regulations I directed to be read aloud at the time, in the assembly before all the people."

"No, Peter Feodorovitch, I see nothing here except that you are doing your best to insult me."

"But you cannot say, my dearest friend and benefactor, that I have tried to insult you. Bethink yourself: I never said a word to you

last year when you built a roof a whole arshin higher than was fixed by law. On the contrary, I pretended not to have observed it. Believe me, my dearest friend, even now, I would, so to speak . . . but my duty, in a word, my obligations, demand that I should have an eye to cleanliness. Just judge for yourself, when suddenly in the principal street” . . .

“Fine principal streets yours are! Every woman goes there and throws down any rubbish she chooses.”

“Permit me to inform you, Ivan Ivanovitch, that it is you who are insulting me. In fact, that does sometimes happen, but, as a rule, only beside fences, sheds, or storehouses; but that a filthy sow should intrude herself in the main street, in the square, now that’s a matter” . . .

“What sort of a matter? Peter Feodorovitch! surely a sow is one of God’s creatures!”

“Agreed. Everybody knows that you are a learned man, that you are acquainted with sciences and various other subjects. In short, I never studied the sciences: I began to learn to write in my thirteenth year. Of course you know that I was a soldier in the ranks.”

“Hm!” said Ivan Ivanovitch.

“Yes,” continued the chief of police, “in 1801 I was in the Forty-second Regiment of chasseurs, lieutenant in the Fourth Battalion. The commander of our battalion was, if I may be permitted to mention it, Capt. Eremeeff.” Thereupon the chief of police thrust his fingers into the snuff-box which Ivan Ivanovitch was holding open, and stirred up the snuff.

Ivan Ivanovitch answered, “Hm!”

“But my duty,” went on the chief of police, “is to obey the commands of the authorities. Do you know, Ivan Ivanovitch, that a person who purloins a government document in the court-room incurs capital punishment, equally with other criminals?”

“I know it; and, if you like, I can give you lessons. It is so ordered with regard to people,—as if you, for instance, were to steal a document; but a sow is an animal, one of God’s creatures.”

“Certainly; but the law reads, ‘Those guilty of theft’ . . . I beg you to listen most attentively,—‘*Those guilty!*’ Here is indicated neither race nor sex nor rank: of course, an

pig's tail
 animal can be guilty. You may say what you please; but the animal, until the sentence is pronounced by the court, should be committed to the charge of the police, as a transgressor of the law."

"No, Peter Feodorovitch," retorted Ivan Ivanovitch coolly, "that shall not be."

"As you like: only I must carry out the orders of the authorities."

"What are you threatening me with? Probably you want to send that one-armed soldier after her. I shall order the woman who tends the door, to drive him off with the poker: he'll get his last arm broken."

"I dare not dispute with you. In case you will not commit her to the charge of the police, then do what you please with her: kill her for Christmas, if you like, and make hams of her, or eat her as she is. Only I should like to ask you, in case you make sausages, to send me a couple, such as your Gapka makes so well of blood and lard. My Agrafena Trofimovna is extremely fond of them."


"I will send you a couple of sausages if you permit."

“I shall be extremely obliged to you, dear friend and benefactor. Now permit me to say one word more. I am commissioned by the judge, as well as by all our acquaintances, so to speak, to effect a reconciliation between you and your friend, Ivan Nikiforovitch.”

“What! with that brute! I am to be reconciled to that clown! Never! It shall not be, it shall not be!” Ivan Ivanovitch was in a remarkably determined frame of mind.

“As you like,” replied the chief of police, treating both nostrils to snuff. “I will not venture to advise you; but permit me to mention—here you live at enmity, and if you make peace” . . .

But Ivan Ivanovitch began to talk about catching quail, as he usually did when he wanted to put an end to a conversation. So the chief of police was obliged to retire without having achieved any success whatever.



VI.

FROM WHICH THE READER CAN EASILY DISCOVER WHAT IS CONTAINED IN IT.

IN spite of all the judge's efforts to keep the matter secret, all Mirgorod knew by the next day that Ivan Ivanovitch's sow had stolen Ivan Nikiforovitch's petition. The chief of police himself, in a moment of forgetfulness, was the first to betray himself. When Ivan Nikiforovitch was informed of it, he said nothing: he merely inquired, "Was it the brown one?"

But Agafya Fedosyevna, who was present, began ~~again to urge~~ Ivan Nikiforovitch. "What's the matter with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch? People will laugh at you as at a fool if you let it pass. How can you remain a nobleman after that? You will be worse than the old woman who sells the honey-cakes with hemp-seed oil, you are so fond of." And the mischief-maker persuaded him. She hunted up somewhere a middle-aged man with black com-

plexion, and spots all over his face, and a dark-blue surtout patched on the elbows, —a regular official scribbler. He blacked his boots with tar, wore three pens behind his ear, and a glass bubble tied to his button-hole with a string, instead of an ink-bottle: he ate as many as nine pies at once, and put the tenth in his pocket, and wrote so many slanders of all sorts on a single sheet of stamped paper, that no reader could get through all at one time without interspersing coughs and sneezes. This poor imitation of a man labored, toiled, and wrote, and finally concocted the following document:—

“To the District Judge of Mirgorod, from the noble, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor.

“In pursuance of my petition which was presented by me, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor, in connection with the nobleman, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan; to which also, the judge of the Mirgorod district court exhibited his indifference. And the shameless, high-handed deed of the brown sow being kept secret, and coming to my ears from outside parties.

“And the said allowing and neglect, plainly malicious, lies incontestably at the judge’s door ; for the sow is a stupid animal, and therefore less fitted for the theft of papers. From which it plainly appears, that the said frequently mentioned sow was not otherwise than instigated to the same by the opponent, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, calling himself a nobleman, and already convicted of theft, conspiracy against life, and desecration of a church. But the said Mirgorod judge, with the partisanship peculiar to him, gave his private consent to this individual ; for without such consent the said sow could by no possible means have been admitted to carry off the document ; for the judge of the district court of Mirgorod is well provided with servants : it was only necessary to summon a soldier, who is always on duty in the reception-room, and who, although he has but one eye and one somewhat damaged arm, has powers quite adequate to driving out a sow, and to beating it with a club, from which is credibly evident the criminal neglect of the said Mirgorod judge, and the incontestable sharing of the Jew-like spoils

therefrom resulting between these mutual conspirators. And the aforesaid robber and nobleman, Ivan Pererépenko, son of Ivan, having disgraced himself, finished his turning on his lathe. Wherefore I, the noble, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor, declare to the said district judge, in proper form, that if the said brown sow, or the man Pererépenko, who was mentioned in the petition, in league with her, be not summoned to the court, and judgment in accordance with justice and my advantage pronounced upon her, then I, Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor, shall present a complaint, with observance of all due formalities, against the said district judge, for his illegal partisanship, to the superior courts.

“Ivan Dovgotchkhun, son of Nikifor, noble of the Mirgorod District.”

This petition produced its effect. The judge was a man of timid disposition, as all good people generally are. He betook himself to the secretary. But the secretary emitted from his lips a thick *hm*, and exhibited in his countenance that indifferent and diabolically equivocal expression which Satan alone assumes when

he sees his victim hasting to his feet. One resource remained, — to reconcile the two friends. But how set about it, when all attempts up to that time had been so unsuccessful? Nevertheless, it was decided to make another effort; but Ivan Ivanovitch declared downright that he would not hear to it, and even flew into a violent passion. Ivan Nikiforovitch, in lieu of an answer, turned his back, and would not utter a word. Then the case went on with the unusual promptness, upon which courts usually pride themselves. Documents were dated, labelled, numbered, sewed together, registered, all in one day, and the matter laid on the shelf, where it continued to lie, lie, lie, for one, two, or three years. Many brides were married; a new street was laid out in Mirgorod; one of the judge's double teeth fell out, and two of his eye-teeth; more children than ever ran about Ivan Ivanovitch's yard; Ivan Nikiforovitch, as reproof to Ivan Ivanovitch, had constructed a new goose-coop, although a little farther off than the first, and built himself completely off from Ivan Ivanovitch, so that these worthy people almost never

beheld each other's faces ; and still the case lay on, in the very best order, in the cabinet, which had become marbled with ink-spots.

In the mean time a very important event for all Mirgorod had taken place. The chief of police had given a reception. Whence shall I obtain the brush and colors to depict this varied gathering, and this magnificent feast? Take your watch, open it, and observe what is going on there. A fearful confusion, is it not? Now, imagine almost the same, if not a greater, number of wheels standing in the chief of police's court-yard. How many britchkas and wagons were there ! One was wide behind and narrow in front; another narrow behind and wide in front. One was a britchka and wagon combined ; another neither a britchka nor a wagon. One resembled a huge hayrick, or a fat merchant's wife ; another a dilapidated Jew, or a skeleton not quite freed from the skin. One was a perfect pipe with long stem in profile ; another, resembling nothing whatever, suggested some strange, utterly formless, and exceedingly fantastic, being. In the midst of this chaos of wheels and carriage-boxes, rose

the semblances of coaches, with windows like those of a room, crossed with broad frames. The coachmen, in gray Cossack coats, svitkas, and white hare coats, with sheepskin hats and caps of various patterns, and pipes in their hands, drove the unharnessed horses through the yard. What a reception the chief of police gave! Permit me to run through the list of those who were there: Taras Tarasovitch, Evpl Akinfovitch, Evtikhiy Evtikhievitch, Ivan Ivanovitch, — not that Ivan Ivanovitch, but another, — Gabba Gavrilonovitch, our Ivan Ivanovitch, Elevferiy Elevferievitch, Makar Nazarevitch, Thoma Grigorovitch . . . I can do no more: my powers fail me, my hand ceases to write. And how many ladies were there! dark and fair and short, fat like Ivan Nikiforovitch, and some so thin that it seemed as though each one might hide herself in the scabbard of the chief's sword. What head-dresses! what costumes! — red, yellow, coffee-color, green, blue, new, turned, made over, — dresses, ribbons, reticules. Farewell, poor eyes! you will never be good for any thing any more after this spectacle. And how long the table was drawn out! and

how all talked! and what a humming they made! What is a mill with its driving-wheel, stones, beams, hammers, wheels, in comparison with this? I cannot tell you exactly what they talked about, but presumably of many agreeable and useful things, such as the weather, dogs, wheat, caps, and dice. At length Ivan Ivanovitch — not that Ivan Ivanovitch, but the other, who had but one eye — said, “It strikes me as strange that my right eye [one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch always spoke sarcastically about himself] does not see Ivan Nikiforovitch, Mr.¹ Dovgotchkhun.”

“He would not come,” said the chief of police.

“Why not?”

“It’s two years now, glory to God! since they quarrelled; that is, Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch: and where one goes, the other will not go.”

“You don’t say so!” Thereupon one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch raised his eye, and clasped his hands. “Well, if people with good eyes cannot live in peace, how am I to live amicably,

¹ Gospodin.

with my bad eye?" At these words, all laughed at the tops of their voices. All loved one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch, because he cracked jokes quite in the style of the present one. A tall, thin man in a frieze coat, with a plaster on his nose, who up to this time had sat in the corner, and never once altered the expression of his face, even when a fly lighted on his nose,—this gentleman rose from his seat, and approached nearer to the crowd which surrounded one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch. "Listen," said one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch, when he perceived that quite a throng had collected about him; "see here: instead of gazing at my bad eye, suppose we make peace between our friends. Ivan Ivanovitch is talking with the women and girls; . . . let us go quietly for Ivan Nikiforovitch, and bring them together."

Ivan Ivanovitch's proposal was unanimously agreed to; and it was decided to send at once to Ivan Nikiforovitch's house, and beg him, at any rate, to come to the chief of police's for dinner. But the difficult question as to who was to be intrusted with this weighty commission rendered all thoughtful. They debated

long as to who was the most fitted for, and expert in, diplomatic matters. At length it was unanimously agreed to depute Anton Prokofievitch Golopuzo for this business.

But it is necessary, first of all, to make the reader somewhat acquainted with this noteworthy person. Anton Prokofievitch was a truly virtuous man, in the fullest meaning of the term. If any one in Mirgorod gives him a neckerchief or underclothes, he returns thanks: if any one gives him a fillip on the nose, — he returns thanks then also. If he was asked, “Why, Anton Prokofievitch, have you a light brown coat with blue sleeves?” he generally replied, “Ah, you haven’t one like it! Wait: it will wear off, and it will be alike all over.” And, in point of fact, the blue cloth, from the effects of the sun, began to turn cinnamon-color, and had now become of the same tint as the rest of the coat. But the strange part of it was, that Anton Prokofievitch had a habit of wearing woollen clothing in summer, and nankeen in winter. Anton Prokofievitch has no house of his own. He used to have one at the extremity of the town; but he sold it, and with

the purchase-money bought a troika of brown horses, and a little britchka in which he drove about to stay with the squires. But as the horses made a good deal of trouble, and money was required for oats, Anton Prokofievitch swapped them off for a violin and a house-maid, with twenty-five paper rubles to boot. Afterwards Anton Prokofievitch sold the violin, and swapped the girl for a morocco and gold tobacco-pouch; and now he has such a tobacco-pouch as no one else has. As a result of this luxury, he can no longer go about among the country-houses, but must remain in the city, and pass the night at different houses, especially of those gentlemen who take pleasure in tapping him on the nose. Anton Prokofievitch is very fond of good eating, and plays well at *durak* and *melnik*.¹ Obeying orders always was his forte; so, taking his hat and cane, he set out at once on his way.

But, as he walked along, he began to ponder in what manner he should contrive to induce Ivan Nikiforovitch to come to the assembly. The rather unbending character of the latter,

¹ Card games: literally, "fool" and "miller."

who was otherwise a worthy man, rendered his undertaking almost hopeless. Yes, and how, in fact, was he to persuade him to come, when even rising from his bed cost him so great an effort? But supposing that he does rise, how can he get him there, where, as he doubtless knows, his irreconcilable enemy already is? The more Anton Prokofievitch reflected, the more difficulties he perceived. The day was sultry, the sun beat down, the perspiration poured from him in streams. Anton Prokofievitch was a tolerably sharp man in many respects (though they did tap him on the nose). In swapping, however, he was not fortunate. He knew very well when to play the fool, and sometimes contrived to turn things to his own profit, amid circumstances and surroundings from which a wise man could rarely escape without loss.

His ingenious mind had contrived a means of persuading Ivan Nikiforovitch; and he was proceeding bravely to face every thing, when an unexpected occurrence somewhat disturbed his equanimity. There is no harm, at this point, in admitting to the reader, that, among other things, Anton Prokofievitch was the owner of

a pair of trousers of such singular properties, that, when he put them on, the dogs always bit his calves. Unfortunately, on this day he had donned that particular pair of trousers ; and so he had hardly resigned himself to meditation when a fearful barking on all sides saluted his ears. Anton Prokofievitch raised such a yell (no one could scream louder than he), that not only did the well-known woman and the inhabitant of the endless surtout rush out to meet him, but even the small boys from Ivan Ivanovitch's yard strewed themselves over him ; and although the dogs succeeded in tasting only one of his calves, yet this sensibly diminished his courage, and he entered the veranda with a certain amount of timidity.

VII. AND LAST.

“AH! how do you do? Why do you irritate the dogs?” said Ivan Nikiforovitch, on perceiving Anton Prokofievitch; for no one spoke otherwise than jestingly with Anton Prokofievitch.

“Hang them! who’s been irritating them?” retorted Anton Prokofievitch.

“You lie!”

“By Heavens, no!—You are invited to dinner by Peter Feodorovitch.”

“Hm!”

“He invited you more pressingly than I can tell you. ‘Why,’ says he, ‘does Ivan Nikiforovitch shun me like an enemy? He never comes round to have a chat, or make a call.’”

Ivan Nikiforovitch stroked his beard.

“‘If,’ says he, ‘Ivan Nikiforovitch does not come now, I shall not know what to think: surely, he must have some design against me. Pray, Anton Prokofievitch, persuade Ivan Niki-

forovitch !' Come, Ivan Nikiforovitch, let us go ! a very choice company is already assembled there."

Ivan Nikiforovitch began to regard a cock, which was perched on the roof, and crowing with all its might.

"If you only knew, Ivan Nikiforovitch," pursued the zealous ambassador, "what fresh sturgeon and caviare Peter Feodorovitch has had sent to him !" Whereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch turned his head, and began to listen attentively. This encouraged the messenger. "Come quick : Thoma Grigorovitch is there too. Why don't you come ?" he added, seeing that Ivan Nikiforovitch still lay in the same position. "Why, shall we go, or not ?"

"I won't !"

This "*I won't*" startled Anton Prokofievitch : he had fancied that his alluring representations had quite moved this very worthy man ; but instead, he heard that decisive "*I won't.*"

"Why won't you ?" he asked, almost with vexation, which he very rarely exhibited, even when they put burning paper on his head, a

trick which the judge and the chief of police were particularly fond of indulging in.

Ivan Nikiforovitch took a pinch of snuff.

“As you like, Ivan Nikiforovitch. I do not know what detains you.”

“Why won’t I go?” said Ivan Nikiforovitch at length: “that brigand will be there!” This was his ordinary way of alluding to Ivan Ivanovitch. “Just God! and is it long” . . .

“He will not be there, he will not be there! May the lightning kill me on the spot!” returned Anton Prokofievitch, who was ready to perjure himself ten times in an hour. “Come along, Ivan Nikiforovitch!”

“Yes, you lie, Anton Prokofievitch! he is there!”

“By Heavens, by Heavens, he’s not! May I never stir from this place if he’s there! Now, just think for yourself, what object have I in lying? May my hands and feet wither! . . . Why, don’t you believe me now? May I perish right here in your presence! Don’t you believe me yet?”

Ivan Nikiforovitch was entirely re-assured by these asseverations, and ordered his valet, in

the boundless surtout, to fetch his trousers and nankeen casaquin.

I suppose that to describe how Ivan Nikiforovitch put on his trousers, how they wound his neckerchief about his neck, and finally dragged on his casaquin, which burst under the left sleeve, would be quite superfluous. Suffice it to say, that during all that time he preserved a becoming calmness of demeanor, and answered not a word to Anton Prokofievitch's proposition to swap something for his Turkish tobacco-pouch.

Meanwhile the assembly awaited with impatience the decisive moment when Ivan Nikiforovitch should make his appearance, and at length comply with the general desire, that these worthy people should be reconciled to each other. Many were almost convinced that Ivan Nikiforovitch would not come. Even the chief of police offered to bet with one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch that he would not come; and he only desisted because one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch demanded that he should wager his shot foot against his own bad eye, at which the chief of police was greatly of-

fended, and the company enjoyed a quiet laugh. No one had yet sat down to the table, although it was long past two o'clock, an hour before which in Mirgorod, even on ceremonious occasions, every one had already long dined.

No sooner did Anton Prokofievitch show himself in the doorway, than he was instantly surrounded by all. Anton Prokofievitch, in answer to all inquiries, shouted one all-decisive word, "He will not come!" No sooner had he uttered this, than a hailstorm of reproaches, scoldings, and, possibly, even fillips, prepared to descend upon his head for the ill success of his mission, when all at once the door opened, and — Ivan Nikiforovitch entered.

If Satan himself or a corpse had appeared, it would not have caused such consternation throughout the company as Ivan Nikiforovitch's unexpected arrival created. But Anton Prokofievitch only went off into a fit of laughter, and held his sides with delight at having played such a joke upon the company.

At all events, it was almost past the belief of all that Ivan Nikiforovitch could, in so brief a

space of time, have attired himself like a respectable gentleman. Ivan Ivanovitch was not there at the moment: he had stepped out somewhere. Recovering from their amazement, the public took an interest in Ivan Nikiforovitch's health, and expressed their pleasure at his increase in breadth. Ivan Nikiforovitch kissed every one, and said, "Very much obliged!"

Meantime the fragrance of the beet-soup was wafted through the apartment, and tickled the nostrils of the hungry guests very agreeably. All rushed headlong to the table. The line of ladies, loquacious and silent, thin and thick, swept on, and the long table glittered with all the hues of the rainbow. I will not describe the courses: I will make no mention of the curd dumplings with sour cream, nor of the dish of haslets that was served with the soup, nor of the turkey with plums and raisins, nor of the dish which greatly resembled in appearance a boot soaked in kvas, nor of the sauce, which is the swan's song of the old-fashioned cook, nor of that other sauce which was brought in all enveloped in the flames of wine, which amused

as well as frightened the ladies extremely. I will say nothing of these dishes, because I like better to eat them than to spend many words in discussing them.

Ivan Ivanovitch was exceedingly pleased with the fish prepared with horseradish. He devoted himself particularly to this useful and nourishing preparation. Picking out all the fine bones from the fish, he laid them on his plate; and happening to glance across the table . . . Heavenly Creator! but this was strange! Opposite him sat Ivan Nikiforovitch.

At the very same instant Ivan Nikiforovitch glanced up also . . . No . . . I can do no more . . . Give me a fresh pen! My pen is flabby, dead, . . . with a fine point for this picture! Their faces seemed to turn to stone, still keeping their defiant expression. Each beheld a long familiar face, to which it seemed the most natural of things to step up as to an unexpected friend, involuntarily, and offer a snuff-box, with the words, "Do me the favor," or "Dare I beg you to do me the favor?" Instead of this, that face was terrible as a forerunner of evil. The perspiration poured in

streams from Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch.

All the guests at table grew dumb with attention, and never took their eyes from the former friends. The ladies, who had been busy up to that time with a sufficiently interesting discussion as to the preparation of capons, suddenly cut their conversation short. All was silence. It was a picture worthy the brush of a great artist.

At length Ivan Ivanovitch pulled out his handkerchief, and began to blow his nose; but Ivan Nikiforovitch glanced about, and his eye rested on the open door. The chief of police at once perceived this movement, and ordered the door to be strongly fastened. Then both of the friends began to eat, and never once glanced at each other again.

As soon as dinner was done, both of the former friends rose from their seats, and began to look for their hats, with a view to departure. Then the chief beckoned; and Ivan Ivanovitch — not that Ivan Ivanovitch, but the other, the one with the one eye — stood behind Ivan Nikiforovitch, and the chief stepped behind Ivan

Ivanovitch, and both began to drag them backwards, in order to bring them together, and not release them until they had shaken hands with each other. Ivan Ivanovitch, the one-eyed Ivan, pushed Ivan Nikiforovitch, though rather crookedly, yet with tolerable success, towards the spot where stood Ivan Ivanovitch; but the chief of police directed his course too much to one side, because he could not steer himself with his refractory leg, which obeyed no orders whatever on this occasion, and, as if with malice aforethought, swung itself uncommonly far, and in quite the contrary direction (which possibly resulted from the fact that there had been an unusual amount of fruit-wine after dinner), so that Ivan Ivanovitch fell over a lady in a red gown, who had thrust herself into the very centre, out of curiosity. Such an omen foreboded nothing good. Nevertheless, the judge, in order to set the matter to rights, took the chief of police's place, and, sweeping all the snuff from his upper lip with his nose, pushed Ivan Ivanovitch in the opposite direction. In Mirgorod this is the usual manner of effecting a reconciliation: it somewhat resembles a game

of ball. As soon as the judge pushed Ivan Ivanovitch, Ivan Ivanovitch with the one eye exerted all his strength, and pushed Ivan Nikiforovitch, from whom the perspiration streamed like rain-water from the roofs. In spite of the fact that the friends resisted to the best of their ability, nevertheless they were brought together, for the two active movers received re-enforcements from the ranks of the guests.

Then they were closely surrounded on all sides, not to be released until they had decided to give each other their hands. "God be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch and Ivan Ivanovitch! declare upon your honor now, what you quarrelled about; trifles, wasn't it? aren't you ashamed of yourselves before people and before God?"

"I do not know," said Ivan Nikiforovitch, panting with fatigue (it is to be observed that he was not at all disinclined to a reconciliation), "I do not know what I did to Ivan Ivanovitch; but why did he destroy my coop, and plot against my life?"

"I am innocent of any evil designs!" said Ivan Ivanovitch, never looking at Ivan Niki-

forovitch. "I swear before God and before you, honorable noblemen, I did nothing to my enemy! Why does he calumniate me, and injure my rank and family?"

"What injury have I done you, Ivan Ivanovitch?" said Ivan Nikiforovitch. One moment more of explanation, and the long enmity was on the point of being extinguished. Ivan Nikiforovitch was already feeling in his pocket for his snuff-box, and was about to say, "Do me the favor."

"Is it no injury," answered Ivan Ivanovitch, without raising his eyes, "when you, my dear sir, insulted my honor and my family with a word which it is improper to repeat here?"

"Permit me to observe, in a friendly manner, Ivan Ivanovitch [here Ivan Nikiforovitch touched Ivan Ivanovitch's button with his finger, which clearly indicated the disposition of his mind], that you took offence, the deuce only knows at what, because I called you a *goose*." . . .

It came over Ivan Nikiforovitch that he had made a mistake in uttering that word; but it was too late: the word was out. Every thing went

to the deuce. If, on the utterance of this word without witnesses, Ivan Ivanovitch lost control of himself, and flew into such a passion as God preserve us from beholding any man in, what was to be expected now? I put it to you, dear readers, what was to be expected now, when the fatal word was uttered in an assemblage of persons among whom were ladies, in whose presence Ivan Ivanovitch liked to be particularly polite? If Ivan Nikiforovitch had set to work in any other manner, if he had only said *bird* and not *goose*, it might still have been arranged; but . . . all was at an end.

He cast one glance upon Ivan Nikiforovitch, and such a glance! If that glance had possessed active power, then it would have turned Ivan Nikiforovitch into dust. The guests understood the glance, and hastened to separate them. And this man, the very model of gentleness, who never let a single poor woman go without interrogating her, rushed out in a fearful rage. Such violent storms do passions produce!

For a whole month nothing was heard of Ivan Ivanovitch. He shut himself up at home.

His ancestral chest was opened; from the chest was taken — what? silver rubles, his grandfather's old silver rubles! And these rubles passed into the ink-stained hands of legal advisers. The case was sent up to the higher court; and when Ivan Ivanovitch received the joyful news that it would be decided on the morrow, then only did he look out upon the world, and resolve to emerge from his house. Alas! from that time forth, the council gave notice day by day, that the case would be finished on the morrow, for the space of ten years.

Five years ago, I passed through the town of Mirgorod. I came at a bad time. It was autumn, with its damp, melancholy weather, mud and mists. An unnatural verdure, the result of tiresome and incessant rains, covered with a watery network the fields and meadows, to which it is as well suited as youthful pranks to an old man, or roses to an old woman. The weather made a deep impression on me at that time: when it was dull, I was dull; but in spite of that, when I came to pass through Mirgorod, my heart beat violently. God, what reminis-

cences ! I had not beheld Mirgorod for twenty years. Here then had lived, in touching friendship, two inseparable friends. And how many prominent people had died ! Judge Demyan Demyanovitch was already gone : Ivan Ivanovitch (with the one eye) had long ceased to live. I entered the main street. All about stood poles with bundles of straw on top : some new grading was being done. Several izbás had been removed. The remnants of board and wattled fences projected sadly, here and there. It was a festival day. I ordered my básket kibitka to stop in front of the church, and entered softly that no one might turn round. To tell the truth, there was no need of this : the church was empty ; there were very few people ; it was evident that even the most pious feared the mud. The candles seemed strangely unpleasant in that gloomy, or, better still, sickly, light. The dim vestibule was melancholy ; the long windows, with their circular panes, were bedewed with tears of rain ; I retired into the vestibule, and addressed myself to a respectable old man, with grayish hair : “ May I inquire if Ivan Nikiforovitch is still living ? ” At that

moment the lamp before the ikon burned up more brightly, and the light fell directly upon the face of my companion. What was my surprise, on looking more closely, to behold features with which I was acquainted! It was Ivan Nikiforovitch himself! But how he had changed!

“Are you well, Ivan Nikiforovitch? How old you have grown!”

“Yes, I have grown old. I have just come from Poltava to-day,” answered Ivan Nikiforovitch.

“You don’t say so! you have been to Poltava in this bad weather?”

“What was to be done? that lawsuit” . . .

At this I sighed involuntarily.

Ivan Nikiforovitch observed my sigh, and said, “Do not be troubled: I have reliable information that the case will be decided next week, and in my favor.”

I shrugged my shoulders, and went to get some news of Ivan Ivanovitch.

“Ivan Ivanovitch is here,” some one said to me, “in the choir.”

Then I saw a gaunt form. Was that Ivan

Ivanovitch? His face was covered with wrinkles, his hair was perfectly white; but the beksha was the same as ever. After the first greetings were over, Ivan Ivanovitch, turning to me with the joyous smile which always became his funnel-shaped face, said, "Have you been informed of the pleasant news?"

"What news?" I inquired.

"My case is to be decided to-morrow without fail: the court has announced it decisively."

I sighed more deeply than before, and made haste to take my leave (for I was bound on very important business), and seated myself in my kibitka.

The lean nags known in Mirgorod as "courier's horses," started, producing with their hoofs, which were buried in a gray mass of mud, a sound very displeasing to the ear. The rain poured in torrents upon the Jew seated on the box, covered with a rug. The dampness penetrated through and through me. The gloomy barrier with a sentry-box, in which an old soldier was repairing his gray weapons, passed slowly by. Again the same fields, in some

places black where they had been dug up, in others of a greenish hue; wet daws and crows; monotonous rain; a tearful sky, without one gleam of light! . . . It is dull in this world, gentlemen!

THE PORTRAIT.¹

PART I.

NOWHERE did so many people pause as before the little picture-shop in the Shtchukinui Dvor. This little shop offered, in fact, the most varied collection of curiosities. The pictures were principally in oil, covered with dark-green varnish, in tinsel frames of a dull yellow. Winter scenes with white trees; very red sunsets, like raging conflagrations; a Flemish boor, with pipe and crippled hand, more like a turkey-cock in cuffs than a human being, — these were the prevailing subjects. To these must be added a few engravings, — a portrait of Khozreff-Mirza in a sheepskin cap, and portraits of some generals or other with three-cornered hats and hooked noses. Moreover, the doors of such

¹ This is the first in the series of St. Petersburg stories.

booths are usually festooned with bundles of publications, printed on large sheets of bark, which bear witness to the native talent of the Russian.

On one was the Tzarevna Miliktrisa Kirbitievna; on another the city of Jerusalem, over whose houses and churches spread red paint, embracing in its sweep a part of the ground, and two praying Russian muzhiks in their shirt-sleeves. There are usually but few purchasers of these productions, but the gazers were many. Some truant lackey probably yawned before them, holding in his hand the dishes containing dinner from the cook-shop for his master, who would doubtless not get his soup very hot. Before them, too, would probably be standing a soldier wrapped in his cloak, — that cavalier of the old-clothes' mart, with two penknives for sale, — and Okhtenka, the huckstress, with her basketful of shoes. Each expresses his admiration in his own fashion. The muzhiks generally touch them with their fingers; the cavaliers gaze seriously at them; serving-boys and apprentices laugh, and tease each other with the colored caricatures; old lackeys in frieze man-

tles look at them merely for the sake of yawning away their time somewhere ; and the hucksters, young Russian women, halt by instinct to hear what people are gossiping about, and to see what they are looking at.

At the time when our story opens, the young painter, Tchartkoff, paused involuntarily as he passed the shop. His old cloak and undandified attire showed him to be a man who was devoted to his art with self-denying zeal, and who had no time to trouble himself about clothes, which always have a secret attraction for young men. He paused before the little shop, and at first enjoyed an inward laugh over the monstrosities of pictures. At length he sank unconsciously into a revery, and began to ponder on the question, What sort of people wanted these productions? It did not seem remarkable to him that the Russian people should gaze with rapture upon Eruslanoff Lazarevitch, on The Glutton and The Carouser, on Thoma and Erema. The delineations of those subjects were sufficient and very easily intelligible to the masses. But where were there purchasers for those streaky, dirty oil-paintings? Who needed those Flemish

boors, those red and blue landscapes, which put forth some claims to a higher stage of art, but which expressed all the depths of its degradation? They did not appear in the least like the works of a self-taught child. In that case, in spite of the intentional caricature of the design, a sharp distinction would have manifested itself. But here were visible only simple dulness, weak, faltering incapacity, which stood, through self-will, in the ranks of art, while its true place was among the lowest trades, — an incapacity which was true, nevertheless, to its vocation, and dragged its trade into art. The same colors, the same manner, the same driving, practised hand, belonging rather to a manufactured automaton than to a man!

He stood long before the dirty pictures, thinking not at all of them at length; but meanwhile the proprietor of the stall, a little gray man, in a frieze cloak, with a beard which had not been shaved since Sunday, had been nudging him for some time, bartering and settling on prices, without even knowing what pleased him, or what he wanted. “Here, I’ll take a silver piece for these peasants and this

little landscape. What painting ! it fairly puts your eyes out ; only just received from the factory ; the varnish isn't dry yet. Or, here is a winter scene, — take the winter scene ; fifteen rubles ; the frame alone is worth it. What a winter scene !” Here the merchant gave a light fillip to the canvas, as if to demonstrate all the merits of the winter scene. “Pray have them done up and sent to your house. Where do you live ? Here, boy, give me some string !”

“Hold, brother, not so fast !” said the painter, coming to himself, and perceiving that the brisk dealer was beginning in earnest to do them up. He was rather ashamed not to take any thing after standing so long at the stall ; and he said, “Here, stop ! I will see if there is any thing I want here ;” and, bending over, he began to pick up from the floor, where they were thrown in a heap, worn, dusty old paintings, which evidently commanded no respect. There were old family portraits, whose descendants, probably, could not be found on earth ; totally unknown pictures, with torn canvas ; frames minus their gilding ; in a word, all sorts

of old trash. But the painter began his search, thinking to himself, "Perhaps I may find something." He had often heard stories about pictures of the great masters having been found among the rubbish at the cheap print-sellers' shops.

The dealer, perceiving what he was about, ceased his importunities, and, assuming his usual attitude and the accompanying expression, took up his post again at the door, hailing the passers-by, and pointing to his stall with one hand. "Hither, friends, here are pictures; enter, enter; just received from the makers!" He shouted his fill, and generally in vain: he had a long talk with a rag-merchant standing opposite, also at the door of his stall; and finally, recollecting that he had a customer in his shop, he turned his back on the public, and went inside. "Well, *batiushka* [my friend], have you chosen any thing?" But the painter had already been standing for some time immovable before a portrait in a large, originally magnificent, frame, but upon which hardly a trace of gilding now remained.

It represented an old man, with a thin,

bronzed face and high cheek-bones ; it seemed as if the features were depicted in a moment of convulsive agitation, and bespoke an un-northern power ; the burning south was stamped upon them. He was muffled in a voluminous Asiatic costume. Dusty and defaced as the portrait was, when he had succeeded in removing the dirt from the face, he saw traces of the work of a great artist. The portrait appeared to be unfinished, but the power of the handling was striking. The eyes were the most remarkable of all : it seemed as though the full power of the artist's brush and all his care had been lavished upon them. They fairly looked, gazed, out of the portrait, destroying its harmony with their strange liveliness. When he carried the portrait to the door, the eyes glanced even more penetratingly. They produced nearly the same impression on the public. A woman standing behind him, exclaimed, "He looks, he looks !" and jumped back. He experienced an unpleasant feeling, inexplicable even to himself, and put the portrait on the floor.

"How? You take the portrait?" said the dealer.

“How much is it?” said the painter.

“Why chaffer over it? give me seventy-five kopeks.”

“No.”

“Well, how much will you give?”

“Twenty kopeks,” said the painter, preparing to go.

“What a price! Why, you couldn’t buy the frame for that! Perhaps you will decide to purchase to-morrow. Sir, sir, turn back! Add ten kopeks. Take it, take it! give me twenty kopeks. To tell the truth, you are my first customer, and that’s the only reason.” Then he made a gesture, as if to signify, “So be it; let the picture go!”

Thus Tchartkoff quite unexpectedly purchased the old portrait, and at the same time reflected, “Why have I bought it? What is it to me?” But there was nothing to be done. He pulled the twenty-kopek piece from his pocket, gave it to the merchant, took the portrait under his arm, and carried it home. On the way thither, he remembered that the twenty-kopek piece he had given for it was his last. His thoughts at once grew dark. Vexation and careless indif-

ference took possession of him at one and the same moment. "Devil take it! This world is disagreeable enough!" he said, with the feeling of a Russian whose affairs are going wrong. And almost mechanically he went on at a quickened pace, filled with indifference to everything. The red light of sunset still lingered in half the sky; the houses facing that way still almost gleamed with its warm light; and meanwhile the cold blue light of the moon grew brighter. Light, half-transparent shadows fell in bands upon the ground, broken by the houses and the feet of the pedestrians. The painter began by degrees to glance up at the sky, flushed with a thin, transparent, dubious light; and nearly at the same moment from his mouth fell the words, "What a delicate tone!" and the words, "What a nuisance! Deuce take it!" and, re-adjusting the portrait, which slipped from under his arm incessantly, he quickened his pace.

Weary, bathed in perspiration, he dragged himself to the fifteenth line, on Vasilievsky Ostroff. With difficulty and much panting he made his way up the stairs flooded with soap-

Just a
Life

suds, and adorned with the tracks of dogs and cats. To his knock on the door, there was no answer: there was no one at home. He leaned against the window, and disposed himself to wait patiently, until at last there resounded behind him the footsteps of a boy in a blue blouse — his servant, model, color-grinder, and scrubber of floors, who also dirtied them with his boots. The boy was called Nikita, and spent all his time in the streets when his master was not at home. Nikita tried for a long time to get the key into the lock, which was quite invisible, by reason of the darkness.

Finally the door was opened. Tchartkoff entered his ante-room, which was intolerably cold, as painters' rooms always are, which fact, moreover, they do not notice. Without giving Nikita his coat, he went into his studio, a large, square, but low apartment, with frozen windows, and fitted up with all sorts of artistic rubbish, — bits of plaster hands, canvas stretched on frames, sketches begun and discarded, and draperies thrown over chairs. He was very tired: he threw off his cloak, placed the portrait abstractedly between two small canvases, and

threw himself on the narrow divan, of which it was impossible to say that it was covered with leather, because a row of brass nails, which had formerly fastened it, had long been left alone by themselves, and the leather remained above by itself; so that Nikita was in the habit of stuffing dirty stockings, shirts, and all the soiled linen, under it. Having seated himself, and stretched himself, as much as it was possible to stretch, on the narrow divan, he finally called for a light.

“There are no candles,” said Nikita.

“How, none?”

“And there were none last night,” said Nikita. The artist recollected that, in fact, there had been no candles the previous evening, quieted down, and became silent. He let himself be undressed, and put on his old, much-worn dressing-gown.

“There has been a gentleman here,” said Nikita. X

“Well, he came for money, I know,” said the painter, waving his hand.

“Yes, and he was not alone,” said Nikita.

“Who else?”

"I don't know, — some policeman or other."

"But why a policeman?"

"I don't know why: he says because your rent is not paid."

"Well, what will come of it?"

"I don't know what will come of it: he said, 'If he won't pay, why, let him leave the rooms.' They are both coming again to-morrow."

"Let them come," said Tchartkoff, with sad indifference; and that gloomy mood took full possession of him.

*Dependent
Character*
Young Tchartkoff was an artist of talent, which promised great things: by fits and starts his work gave evidence of observation, thought, and a strong inclination to approach nearer to nature.

"Look here, my friend," his professor said to him more than once, "you have talent; it will be a shame if you waste it: but you are impatient; you have but to be attracted by a thing, to fall in love with a thing — you are all engrossed with it, and every thing else is rubbish, all else goes for nothing, you won't even look at it. See to it that you do not become a fashionable artist: at present your colors begin to

assert themselves too loudly; your drawing is not strong; at times it is quite weak, — no lines are to be seen: you are already striving after the fashionable light, because it strikes the eye at once. . . . See, you fall into the English style as if on purpose. Have a care! the world already begins to attract you: I have already seen you with a shiny hat, a foppish neckerchief. . . . It is seductive; it is possible to allow one's self to paint fashionable little pictures and portraits for money; but talent is ruined, not developed, by that means. Be patient; think out every piece of work; discard your foppishness; let others amass money, your own will not fail you."

The professor was partly right. Our artist sometimes wanted to carouse, to play the fop, in a word, to exhibit his youth in some way or other; but he could control himself withal. At times he could forget every thing, when he had once taken his brush in hand, and could not tear himself from it except as from a delightful dream. His taste perceptibly developed. He did not as yet understand all the depths of Raphael, but he was attracted by

Guido's broad and rapid handling, he paused before the portraits by Titian, he delighted in the Flemish masters. The dark veil enshrouding the ancient pictures had not yet passed away from before them; but he already saw something in them, though in private he did not agree with the professor that the old masters are irremediably lost to us: it seemed to him that the nineteenth century had improved upon them considerably, that the delineation of nature had become clearer, more vivid, nearer; in a word, he thought on this point as youth does think, having already accomplished something, and recognizing it with internal pride. It sometimes vexed him when he saw how a strange artist, French or German, sometimes not even a painter by profession, but only a skilful dauber, produced, by the celerity of his brush and the vividness of his coloring, a universal commotion, and amassed in a twinkling a funded capital. This did not occur to him when, fully occupied with his own work, he forgot food and drink and all the world: but when dire want arrived, when he had no money wherewith to buy brushes and colors, when his

implacable landlord came ten times a day to demand the pay for his rooms, then did the luck of the wealthy artists present itself to his hungry imagination; then did the thought which so often traverses Russian minds, traverse his, — to give up altogether, and go down hill, and utterly to the bad. And now he was almost in this frame of mind.

“Yes, be patient, be patient!” he exclaimed with vexation; “but there is an end to patience at last. Be patient! but what money am I to dine with to-morrow? No one will lend me any. If I bring myself to sell all my pictures and sketches, they would give me twenty kopeks for the whole of them. They are useful; I feel that not one of them was undertaken in vain; I learned something from each one. Yes, but of what use? studies, trial-sketches — and all will be studies, trial-sketches — and there will be no end to them. And who will buy, knowing me not even by name? yes, and who wants drawings from the antique, or the life class, or my unfinished love of a Psyche, or the perspective of my chamber, or the portrait of my Nikita, though it is better, to tell

the truth, than the portraits by any of the fashionable artists? In fact, what does it mean? Why do I worry, and toil like a learner over the alphabet, when I might shine as brightly as the rest, and have money, too, like them?"

Thus speaking, the artist suddenly shuddered, and turned pale: a convulsively distorted face gazed at him, peeping forth from the surrounding canvas; two terrible eyes were fixed straight upon him, as if preparing to devour him; on the mouth was written a menacing command of silence. Frightened, he tried to scream and summon Nikita, who had already succeeded in setting up a gigantic snoring in his ante-room; but he suddenly paused and laughed; the sensation of fear subsided in a moment; it was the portrait he had bought, and which he had quite forgotten. The light of the moon illuminating the chamber, fell upon it, and lent it a strange likeness to life. He began to examine and wipe it off. He moistened a sponge with water, passed it over the picture several times, washed off nearly all the accumulated and incrustated dust and dirt, hung it on the wall before him, and wondered yet more at the remarkable workman-

ship: almost the whole face had gained new life, and the eyes gazed at him so that he shuddered at last; and, springing back, he exclaimed in a voice of surprise, "It looks, it looks, with human eyes!" Then suddenly there came to his mind a story he had heard long before from his professor, of a certain portrait by the renowned Leonardo da Vinci, upon which the great master labored several years, and still held it incomplete, and which, according to Vasari, was nevertheless deemed by all the most complete and finished product of his art. The most finished thing about it was the eyes, which amazed his contemporaries: the very smallest, barely visible veins in them were not omitted, but committed to the canvas. But here, in the portrait now before him, there was something singular. This was no longer art: it even destroyed the harmony of the portrait; they were living, human eyes! It seemed as though they had been cut from a living man, and inserted there. Here was none of that high enjoyment which takes possession of the spirit at the sight of an artist's production, no matter how terrible the subject he may have chosen:

there was a painful, fatiguing sensation here. "What is it?" the artist asked himself involuntarily; "but this is nature, nevertheless, living nature. Whence this strangely unpleasant feeling? Is a slavish, literal copy of nature a crime which proclaims itself in a shrill, discordant shriek? If you take an unsympathetic subject, one void of feeling, having no sympathy with it yourself, will it infallibly stand forth, in its fearful realism, unillumined by any intangible, hidden light, to the thoughts of all? will it stand forth in such realism as is displayed, when, wishing to understand the secret of a very handsome man, you arm yourself with an anatomical knife, cut to his heart, and behold a hideous man? Why does simple, lowly Nature reveal herself in the works of one artist in such a light that you experience no sensation of degradation,—on the contrary, you seem to enjoy it for some reason, and things seem to flow more quietly and smoothly around you after it? And why does this same Nature seem, in the hands of another artist, low and vile? Yet he was true to Nature too. But, no, there is nothing illuminating in her. It

makes no difference what aspect Nature wears : however magnificent she may be, there is always something wanting, unless the sun is in the sky."

Again he approached the portrait, in order to view those wondrous eyes, and perceived with terror that they were gazing at him. This was no copy from Nature : it was life, the strange life which might have lighted up the face of a dead man, who had risen from the grave. Whether it was the effect of the moonlight, which brought with it fantastic thoughts, and transformed things into strange likenesses, opposed to those of matter-of-fact day, or from some other cause, it suddenly became frightful to him, he knew not why, to sit alone in the room. He retreated softly from the portrait, turned aside, and tried not to look at it ; but his eye involuntarily, of its own accord, glanced sideways, and watched it. Finally, he became afraid to walk about the room : it seemed as though some one were on the point of stepping up behind him ; and every time he turned, he glanced timidly back. He had never been cowardly ; but his imagination and nerves were sen-

*He knew
the
Portrait*

sitive, and that evening he could not explain his involuntary fear. He seated himself in the corner, but even then it seemed to him that some one was peeping over his shoulder into his face. Even Nikita's snores, resounding from the ante-room, did not chase away his fear. At length he rose from his seat, timidly, without raising his eyes, went behind his screen, and lay down on his bed. Through the cracks of the screen he saw his room illuminated by the moon, and saw the portrait hanging stiffly on the wall. The eyes were fixed upon him in a still more terrible and significant manner, and it seemed as if they would not look at any thing but him. Overpowered with a feeling of oppression, he decided to rise from his bed, seized a sheet, and, approaching the portrait, covered it up completely.

Having done this, he lay down more quietly on the bed, and began to meditate upon the poverty and pitiful lot of the artist, of the thorny path before him in the world;—but, meanwhile, his eye glanced involuntarily through the joint of the screen, at the portrait muffled in the sheet. The light of the moon height-

ened the whiteness of the sheet, and it seemed to him as though those terrible eyes shone through the cloth. With terror he fixed his eyes more steadfastly on it, as if wishing to convince himself that it was all nonsense. But at length, in fact, . . . he sees, sees clearly: there is no longer a sheet; . . . the portrait is quite uncovered, and gazes past every thing around it, straight at him; gazes fairly into his heart. . . . His heart grows cold. And he sees: the old man has moved, and suddenly, supporting himself on the frame with both arms, has raised himself by his hands, and, putting forth both feet, has leaped out of the frame. . . . Through the crack of the screen, the empty frame alone was now visible. Footsteps resounded in the room, and they approached nearer and nearer to the screen. The poor artist's heart began to beat harder. He expected every moment, his breath failing for fear, that the old man would look round the screen at him. And lo! he did look behind the screen, with the very same bronzed face, and with his big eyes roving about. Tchartkoff tried to scream, and felt that his voice was

*Portrait**Portrait*

gone ; he tried to move, to make a gesture ; his limbs refused their office. With open mouth, and failing breath, he gazed at the terrible, tall phantom, in some sort of a voluminous Asiatic robe, and waited for what it would do. The old man sat down almost on his very feet, and then pulled out something from among the folds of his wide garment : it was a purse. The old man untied it, seized it by both ends, and shook it. Heavy rolls of money, like long pillars, fell out with a dull thud upon the floor : each was wrapped in blue paper, and on each was marked, "*1,000 ducats.*" The old man extended his long, bony hand from his wide sleeves, and began to undo the rolls. The gold glittered. Great as was the artist's unreasoning fear, and feeling of oppression, he bent all his attention upon the gold, gazing motionless, as it made its appearance in the bony hands, gleamed, rang lightly or dully, and was wrapped up again. Then he perceived one packet which had rolled farther than the rest, to the very leg of his bedstead, near his pillow. He grasped it almost convulsively, and glanced in fear at the old man to see if he perceived it. But the

gold

he perceived it

old man appeared very much occupied: he collected all his rolls, replaced them in the purse, and went outside the screen without looking at him. Tchartkoff's heart beat wildly as he heard the rustle of the retreating footsteps sounding through the room. He clasped his roll more closely in his hand, quivering in every limb; and suddenly he heard the footsteps approaching the screen again. . . . Apparently the old man had recollected that one roll was missing. And lo! again he looked round the screen at him. The artist in despair grasped the roll with all his strength, exerted all his power to make a movement, shrieked — and awoke.

He was bathed in a cold perspiration; his heart beat as hard as it was possible for it to beat; his chest was oppressed, as though his last breath was about to fly from it. "Was it a dream?" he said, seizing his head with both hands. But the terrible life-likeness of the apparition did not resemble a dream. As he woke, he saw the old man step into the frame: the skirts of the voluminous garment even fluttered, and his hand felt plainly that a

moment before it had held something heavy. The moonlight illumined the room, bringing out from the dark corners, here a canvas, there the model of a hand; a drapery thrown over a chair; trousers and uncleaned boots. Then he perceived that he was not lying in his bed, but standing upright, directly before the portrait. How he had come there, he could not in the least comprehend. Still more surprised was he, to find the portrait quite uncovered, and there actually was no sheet over it. Motionless with terror, he gazed at it, and perceived that the living, human eyes were fastened upon him. A cold perspiration started out upon his face. He wanted to move away, but felt that his feet had in some way become rooted to the earth. And he saw — that this was not a dream. The old man's features moved, and his lips began to project towards him, as though he wanted to suck him in. . . . With a yell of despair he jumped back — and awoke.

“Was it a dream?” With his heart beating to bursting, he felt about him with both hands. Yes, he was lying in bed, and in precisely the

position in which he had fallen asleep. Before him stood the screen. The moonlight flooded the apartment. Through the crack of the screen, the portrait was visible, covered with the sheet, as it should be, just as he had covered it. And so this, too, was a dream? But his clinched fist still felt as though something had been in it. The beating of his heart was violent, almost terrible; the weight upon his breast, intolerable. He fixed his eyes upon the crack, and stared steadfastly at the sheet. And lo! he sees plainly how the sheet begins to open, as though hands were pushing from underneath, and trying to throw it off. “Lord God, what is it!” he shrieked, crossing himself in despair — and awoke.

again

And was this also a dream? He sprang from his bed, frantic, half mad, and could not comprehend what had happened to him: was it the oppression of a nightmare, or *domovoi* (kobold), the raving of fever, or a living apparition? Striving to calm, as far as possible, his mental tumult, and wildly rushing blood, which beat with straining pulses in every vein, he went to the window, and opened the pane.

The cool, fragrant breeze revived him. The moonlight lay on all the roofs and white walls of the houses, though small clouds passed frequently across the sky. All was still: from time to time there struck the ear, the distant rumble of a drozhky, whose izvoscthik was sleeping in some obscure alley, lulled to slumber by his lazy nag, as he awaited a belated passenger. He put his head out of the pane, and gazed long. Already the signs of approaching dawn were spreading in the sky. At last he felt drowsy, clapped to the pane, stepped back, lay down in bed, and quickly fell, like one exhausted, into a deep sleep.

He awoke late, and with the disagreeable feeling of a man who has been choked with coal-gas: his head ached painfully. The room was dim: an unpleasant humidity pervaded the air, and penetrated the cracks of his windows, stopped with pictures and grounded canvas. Dissatisfied and depressed as a wet cock, he seated himself on his dilapidated divan, not knowing what to do, what to undertake, and at length remembered all his dream. As he recalled it, the dream presented itself to his mind

as so oppressively real that he even began to wonder whether it were a dream, and simple delirium, whether there were not something else here, whether it were not an apparition. Removing the sheet, he looked at the terrible portrait by the light of day. The eyes were really striking in their extraordinary liveliness, but he found nothing particularly terrible in them; yet an indescribably unpleasant feeling lingered in his mind. Nevertheless, he could not quite convince himself that it was a dream. It struck him that there must have been some terrible fragment of reality in the midst of the dream. It seemed as though there were something in the old man's very glance and expression which said that he had been with him that night: his hand felt the weight which had so recently lain in it as if some one had but just snatched it from him. It seemed to him, that, if he had only grasped the roll more firmly, it would have remained in his hand, even after his awakening.

“My God, if I had only a portion of that money!” he said, breathing heavily; and in his fancy, all those rolls, with their fascinating in-

scription, "*1,000 ducats*," began to pour out of the purse. The rolls opened, the gold glittered, was wrapped up again; and he sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the empty air, as if he were incapable of tearing himself from such a sight, like a child who sits before a plate of sweets, and beholds, with watering mouth, other people devouring them.

At last there came a knock on the door, which recalled him unpleasantly to himself. The landlord entered with the constable of the district, whose presence, as is well known, is even more disagreeable to poor people than is the presence of a beggar to the rich. The landlord of the little house in which Tchartkoff lived resembled the other individuals who own houses anywhere in the fifteenth line of Vasilievsky Ostroff, on the Petersburg side, or in the distant regions of Kolomna, — individuals of which there are many in Russia, and whose character is as difficult to define as the color of a threadbare surtout. In his youth he had been a captain and a braggart, had served in the civil service, was a master in the art of flogging, was skilful and foppish and stupid;

but in his old age he combined all these various qualities into a kind of dim indefiniteness. He was a widower, already on the retired list, no longer boasted, nor was dandified, no longer quarrelled, and loved only to drink tea and talk all sorts of nonsense over it; he walked about his room, and arranged the ends of the tallow candles; punctually at the end of each month he called upon his lodgers for his money; went out into the street, with the key in his hand, to look at the roof of his house, and sometimes chased the *dvornik* (porter) out of his kennel, where he had hidden himself to sleep; in a word, he was a man on the retired list, who, after the turmoils and wildness of his life, had only his old-fashioned habits left.

"Please to see for yourself, Varukh Kuzmitch," said the landlord, turning to the officer, and throwing out his hands, "this man does not pay his rent, he does not pay."

"How can I when I have no money? Wait, and I will pay."

"I can't wait, my good fellow," said the landlord angrily, making a gesture with the key which he held in his hand. "Lieutenant-

Colonel Potogonkin has lived with me seven years, seven years already; Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff hires the carriage-house and stable, except two stalls, and has three household servants, . . . that is the kind of lodgers I have. I will say to you frankly, that this is not an establishment where people do not pay their rent. Pay your money at once, if you please, or else clear out."

"Yes, if you hired the rooms, please to pay," said the constable, with a slight shake of the head, as he laid his finger on one of the buttons of his uniform.

"Well, what am I to pay with? that's the question. I haven't a groschen just at present."

"In that case, satisfy the claims of Ivan Ivanovitch with the fruits of your profession," said the officer: "perhaps he will consent to take pictures."

"No, thank you, my good fellow, no pictures. Pictures of holy subjects, such as one could hang upon the walls, would be well enough; or some general with a star, or Prince Kutusoff's portrait: but this fellow has painted that

muzhik, that muzhik in his blouse, his servant who grinds his colors ! The idea of painting his portrait, the hog ! I'll thrash him well : he took all the nails out of my bolts, the scoundrel ! Just see what subjects ! here he has drawn this room. It would have been well enough if he had taken a clean, well-furnished room ; but he has gone and drawn this one, with all the dirt and rubbish which he has collected. Just see how he has defaced my room ! Look for yourself. Yes, and my lodgers have been with me seven years, the lieutenant-colonel, Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff. . . . No, I tell you, there is no worse lodger than a painter : he lives like a pig ; simply — God have mercy !”

And the poor artist had to listen patiently to all this. Meanwhile the officer had occupied himself with examining the pictures and studies, and showed that his mind was more advanced than the landlord's, and that he was not insensible to artistic impressions.

“Heh !” said he, tapping one canvas, on which was depicted a naked woman, “this subject is — lively. But why so much black under her nose ? did she take snuff ?”

“Shadow,” answered Tchartkoff gruffly, without looking at him.

“But it might have been put in some other place: it is too conspicuous under the nose,” observed the officer. “And whose likeness is this?” he continued, approaching the old man’s portrait. “It’s too terrible. Was he really so dreadful? Ah! why, he actually looks! What a thunder-cloud! From whom did you paint it?”

“Ah! it is from a” — said Tchartkoff, and did not finish his sentence: he heard a crack. It seems that the officer had pressed too hard on the frame of the portrait, thanks to the axe-like build of his constable’s hands: the small boards on the side caved in, one fell on the floor, and with it fell, with a heavy clash, a roll in blue paper. The inscription caught Tchartkoff’s eye, — “*1,000 ducats.*” Like a madman, he sprang to pick it up, grasped the roll, and gripped it convulsively in his hand, which fell down with the weight.

“Wasn’t there a sound of money?” inquired the officer, hearing the noise of something falling on the floor, and not catching sight of it, by

reason of the rapidity of the movement with which Tchartkoff had hastened to pick it up.

“What business is it of yours what is in my room?”

“It’s my business because you ought to pay your rent to the landlord at once, because you have money, and won’t pay, — that’s why it’s my business.”

“Well, I will pay him to-day.”

“Well, and why wouldn’t you pay him before, instead of making trouble for your landlord, and bothering the police to boot?”

“Because I did not want to touch this money. I will pay him all this evening, and leave the rooms to-morrow, because I will not stay with such a landlord.”

“Well, Ivan Ivanovitch, he will pay you,” said the constable, turning to the landlord. “But in case you are not satisfied in every respect this evening, then you must excuse me, Mr. Painter.” So saying, he put on his three-cornered hat, and went into the ante-room, followed by the landlord hanging his head, and apparently engaged in meditation.

“Thank God, Satan has carried them off!”

said Tchartkoff, when he heard the door of the ante-room shut. He looked out into the ante-room, sent Nikita off on some errand, in order to be quite alone, fastened the door behind him, and, returning to his room, began with wildly beating heart to undo the roll.

In it were ducats, all new, and bright as fire. Almost beside himself, he sat down beside the pile of gold, still asking himself, "Is not this all a dream?" There were just a thousand in the roll: the exterior was precisely like what he had seen in his dream. He turned them over, and looked at them for some minutes, without coming to his senses. His imagination conjured up all the tales of hoards, cabinets with secret drawers, left by ancestors for their spendthrift descendants, with firm belief in the extravagance of their life. He pondered thus: "Did not some grandfather, in the present instance, leave a gift for his grandchild, shut up in the frame of the family portrait?" Filled with romantic fancies, he began to think: had not this some secret connection with his fate? was not the existence of the portrait bound up with his own existence, and was not his acquisi-

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tion of it a kind of predestination? He began to examine the frame with curiosity. On one side a cavity was hollowed out, concealed so skilfully and neatly by a little board, that, if the massive hand of the constable had not effected a breach, the ducats might have remained hidden to the end of time. On examining the portrait, he marvelled again at the exquisite workmanship, the extraordinary treatment of the eyes; they no longer appeared terrible to him; but, nevertheless, each time, a disagreeable feeling involuntarily lingered in his mind. "No," he said to himself, "no matter whose grandfather you were, I'll put a glass over you, and get you a gilt frame." Then he laid his hand on the golden pile before him, and his heart beat faster at the touch. "What shall I do with them?" he said, fixing his eyes on them. "Now I am independent for at least three years: I can shut myself up in my room and work. I have money for colors now; for dinner, tea, my food and lodging—no one will annoy and disturb me now. I will buy myself a first-class manikin, I will order a plaster torso, I will model feet, I will have a Venus, I

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will buy engravings of the best pictures. And if I work three years to satisfy myself, without haste, not for sale, I shall surpass them all, and I may become a distinguished artist."

Thus he spoke in solitude, with his good judgment prompting; but louder and more distinct sounded another voice within him. And as he glanced once more at the gold, it was not thus that his twenty-two years and fiery youth spoke. Now every thing was within his power on which he had hitherto gazed with envious eyes, which he had viewed from afar with longing. How his heart beat when he thought of it! To wear a fashionable coat, to feast after long abstinence, to hire handsome apartments, to go, on the instant, to the theatre, to the confectioner's, to . . . other places; and seizing his money, he was in the street in a moment.

First of all he went to the tailor, clothed himself anew from head to foot, and began to look at himself incessantly, like a child. He bought perfumes, pomades; hired the first elegant suite of apartments with mirrors and plate-glass windows which he came across in the Nevsky Prospect, without haggling about the

price; bought, on the impulse of the moment, in a shop, a costly opera-glass; bought, also on impulse, a quantity of neckties of every description, many more than he needed; had his hair curled at the hairdresser's; rode through the city twice without any object whatever; ate an immense amount of candy at the confectioner's; and went to the French Restaurant, of which he had heard rumors as indistinct as though they had concerned the Empire of China. There he dined, with his arms akimbo, casting proud glances at the other visitors, and continually arranging his curls in the glass. There he drank a bottle of champagne, which had been known to him hitherto only by hearsay. The wine rather affected his head; and he emerged into the street, lively, pugnacious, ready to raise the Devil, according to the Russian expression. He strutted along the sidewalk, levelling his opera-glass at everybody. On the bridge he caught sight of his former professor, and slipped past him neatly, as if he did not see him, so that the astounded professor stood stock-still on the bridge for a long time, with a face suggestive of an interrogation-point.

All his things, every thing he owned, — easels, canvas, pictures, — were transported that same evening to his elegant quarters. He arranged the best of them in conspicuous places, threw the worst into a corner, and promenaded up and down the handsome rooms, glancing constantly in the mirrors. An unconquerable desire to seize fame by the tail, and show himself to the world at once, had arisen in his mind. He already heard the shouts, “Tchartkoff! Tchartkoff! Have you seen Tchartkoff’s picture? How rapidly Tchartkoff paints! How much talent Tchartkoff has!” He paced the room in a state of rapture, unconscious whither he went. The next day he took ten ducats, and went to the publisher of a popular journal, asking his charitable assistance. He was joyfully received by the journalist, who called him on the spot, “*Most respected sir,*” squeezed both his hands, made minute inquiries as to his name, birthplace, residence; and the next day there appeared in the journal, below a notice of some newly invented tallow candles, an article with the following heading: —

We sell portraits

“TCHARTKOFF'S IMMENSE TALENT.

“We hasten to delight the cultivated inhabitants of the capital with a discovery which we may call splendid in every respect. All are agreed that there are among us many very handsome physiognomies and faces, but hitherto there has been no means of committing them to the wonder-working canvas for transmission to posterity. This want has now been supplied: an artist has been found who unites in himself all desirable qualities. The beauty can now feel assured that she will be depicted with all the grace of her spiritual charms, airy, fascinating, wondrous, butterfly-like, flitting among the flowers of spring. The stately father of a family can see himself surrounded by his family. Merchant, warrior, citizen, statesman — hasten one and all, come from your promenade, your expedition to your friend, your cousin, to the glittering bazaar; hasten, wherever you may be. The artist's magnificent establishment [Nevsky Prospect, such and such a number] is all hung with portraits from his brush, worthy of Van Dyck or

Titian. One knows not which to admire most, their truth and likeness to the originals, or the wonderful brilliancy and freshness of the coloring. Hail to you, artist! you have drawn a lucky number in the lottery. Long live Andrei Petrovitch!" (The journalist evidently liked familiarity.) "Glorify yourself and us. We know how to prize you. Universal popularity, and with it money, will be your meed, though some of our brother journalists may rise against you."

The artist read this article with secret satisfaction: his face beamed. He was mentioned in print; it was a novelty to him: he read the lines over several times. The comparison with Van Dyck and Titian flattered him extremely. The phrase, "Long live Andrei Petrovitch," also pleased him greatly: being called by his Christian name and patronymic in print was an honor hitherto utterly unknown to him. He began to pace the chamber briskly, to tumble his hair; now he sat down in an arm-chair, then sprang up, and seated himself on the sofa, planning each moment how he would receive visitors, male and female; he went to his canvas,

and made a rapid sweep of the brush, endeavoring to impart a graceful movement to his hand.

The next day, the little bell at his door rang: he hastened to open. A lady entered, followed by a lackey in a furred livery-coat; and with the lady entered an eighteen-year-old girl, her daughter.

“You are Monsieur Tchartkoff?”

The artist bowed.

“A great deal is being written about you: your portraits, it is said, are the height of perfection.” So saying, the lady raised her glass to her eyes, and glanced rapidly over the walls, upon which nothing was hanging. “But where are your portraits?”

“They have been taken away,” replied the artist, somewhat confusedly: “I have but just moved into these apartments; so they are still on the road, . . . they have not arrived.”

“You have been in Italy?” asked the lady, levelling her glass at him, as she found nothing else to point it at.

“No, I have not been there; but I wish to go, . . . and I have deferred it for a while. . . .

Here is an arm-chair, Madame: you are fatigued?" . . .

"Thank you: I have been sitting a long time in the carriage. Ah, at last I behold your work!" said the lady, running to the opposite wall, and bringing her glass to bear upon his studies, programmes, perspectives, and portraits which were standing on the floor. "C'est charmant, Lise! Lise, venez-ici. Rooms in the style of Teniers. Do you see? Disorder, disorder, a table with a bust upon it, a hand, a palette; here is dust . . . see how the dust is painted! C'est charmant. And here on this canvas is a woman washing her face. Quelle jolie figure! Ah! a little peasant, a muzhik in a Russian blouse! see, — a little muzhik! So you do not devote yourself exclusively to portraits?"

"Oh! that is rubbish. I was trying experiments . . . studies."

"Tell me your opinion of the portrait painters of the present day. Is it not true that there are none now like Titian? There is not that strength of color, that — that . . . What a pity that I cannot express to you in Russian." (The lady was fond of paintings, and had gone

through all the galleries in Italy with her eyeglass.) “But Monsieur Nohl . . . ah, how he paints! what remarkable work! I think his faces have even more expression than Titian’s. You do not know M. Nohl?”

“Who is Nohl?” inquired the artist.

“Monsieur Nohl. Ah, what talent! He painted her portrait when she was only twelve years old. You must certainly come to see us. Lise, you shall show him your album. You know, we came expressly that you might begin her portrait immediately.”

“What? I am ready this very moment.” And in a trice he pulled forward an easel with a piece of canvas already prepared, grasped his palette, and fixed his eyes on the daughter’s pretty little face. If he had been acquainted with human nature, he might have read in it the dawning of a childish passion for balls, the dawning of sorrow and misery at the length of time before dinner and after dinner, of a desire to go to walk in her dress only, the heavy traces of uninterested application to various arts, insisted upon by her mother for the elevation of the sentiments of her soul. But the

artist perceived only the tender little face, a seductive subject for his brush, the body almost as transparent as porcelain, the slight attractive fatigue, the delicate white neck, and the aristocratically slender form. And he prepared beforehand to triumph, to display the delicacy of his brush, which had hitherto had to deal only with the harsh features of coarse models, with severe antiques and copies of classic masters. He already saw in fancy how this delicate little face would turn out.

“Do you know,” said the lady with a positively touching expression of countenance, “I should like . . . she is dressed up now ; I confess, that I should not like her in the costume to which we are accustomed : I should like her to be simply attired, and seated among green shadows, like meadows, with a flock or a grove in the distance, . . . so that it could not be seen that she goes to balls or fashionable entertainments. Our balls, I confess, so murder the intellect, so deaden all remnants of feeling. . . . Simplicity, would there were more simplicity !”

Alas ! it was stamped on the faces of mother and daughter, that they had so overdanced them-

selves at balls, that they had become almost wax figures.

Tchartkoff set to work, seated the original, reflected a bit, fixed upon the idea, waved his brush in the air, settling the points mentally, screwed his eyes up a little, retreated, looked off in the distance, and then began and finished the sketching in, in an hour. Satisfied with it, he began to paint: the work fascinated him; he forgot every thing, forgot the very existence of the aristocratic ladies, began even to display some artistic tricks, uttering various odd sounds; humming to himself now and then, as artists do when immersed heart and soul in their work. Without the slightest ceremony, with one wave of his brush, he made the sitter lift her head, which finally began to turn in a very decided manner, and express utter weariness.

“Enough, for the first time, enough,” said the lady.

“A little more,” said the artist, forgetting himself.

“No, it is time to stop. Lise, three o’clock!” said the lady, taking out a tiny watch, which

hung by a gold chain from her girdle. "Ah, how late it is!" she cried.

"Only a minute," said Tchartkoff innocently, with the pleading voice of a child.

But the lady appeared to be not at all inclined to yield to his artistic demands on this occasion: she promised instead, to sit longer the next time.

"It is vexatious, all the same!" thought Tchartkoff to himself: "I had just got my hand in;" and he remembered that no one had interrupted him or stopped him when he was at work in his studio on Vasilievsky Ostroff. Nikita sat motionless in one place—you might paint him as long as you pleased: he even went to sleep in the attitude prescribed to him. And, dissatisfied, he laid his brush and palette on a chair, and paused in irritation before the picture.

The woman of the world's compliments awoke him from his revery. He flew to the door to show them out: on the stairs he received an invitation to dine with them the following week, and returned with a cheerful face to his apartments. The aristocratic lady had

completely charmed him. Up to that time he had looked upon such beings as unapproachable, — born solely to ride in magnificent carriages with liveried footmen and stylish coachman, and to cast indifferent glances on the poor man travelling on foot in a cheap cloak. And now, all of a sudden, one of those beings had entered his room : he was painting her portrait, was invited to dinner in an aristocratic house. An unusual feeling of pleasure took possession of him : he was completely intoxicated, and rewarded himself with a splendid dinner, an evening at the theatre ; and afterwards he took a ride through the city in a carriage without any necessity whatever.

But during all these days, his ordinary work did not fall in with his mood at all. He did nothing but prepare himself, and wait for the moment when the bell should ring. At last the aristocratic lady arrived with her pale daughter. He seated them, pulled forward the canvas, with skill, and some efforts at fashionable airs, and began to paint. The sunny day and bright light aided him not a little : he saw in his dainty sitter much, which, caught and commit-

ted to the canvas, would give great value to the portrait; he perceived that he might bring forth something rare if he could reproduce, with accuracy, all which nature then offered to his eyes. His heart even began to beat faster when he felt that he was expressing something which others had not even seen as yet. His work engrossed him completely: he was entirely taken up with his painting, and again forgot the aristocratic origin of the sitter. With heaving breast he saw the delicate traits and the almost transparent body of the eighteen-year-old maiden appear under his hand. He had caught every shade, the slight sallowness, the almost imperceptible blue tinge under the eyes, — and was already preparing to put in the tiny pimple on the brow, when he suddenly heard the mother's voice behind him.

“Ah! why do you paint that? it is not necessary: and you have made it here . . . in several places, rather yellow . . . and here quite so, like dark spots.” The artist undertook to explain that the spots and yellow tinge would turn out well, that they brought out the delicate and pleasing tones of the face. He was in-

formed that they did not bring out tones, and would not turn out well at all, and that it merely seemed so to him. "But permit me to touch up just this one place, here, with yellow," said the simple-minded artist. But he was not permitted. It was explained to him that just to-day Lise did not feel quite well; that she never was sallow, and that her face was distinguished for its fresh coloring. Sadly he began to erase what his brush had produced upon the canvas. Many a nearly invisible trait disappeared, and with it vanished also a portion of the resemblance. He began indifferently to give it that commonplace coloring which can be painted mechanically, and which lends to a face, even when taken from nature, the sort of cold ideality observable on school programmes. But the lady was satisfied when the objectionable color was quite banished. She merely expressed surprise that the work lasted so long, and added that she had heard that he finished a portrait completely in two sittings. The artist could not think of any answer to this. The ladies rose, and prepared to depart. He laid aside his brush, escorted them to the door, and then stood

disconsolate for a long while in one spot, before his portrait.

He gazed stupidly at it ; and meanwhile there passed before his mind those delicate feminine features, those shades, and airy tints which he had copied, which his brush had annihilated. Engrossed with them, he set the portrait on one side, and hunted up the head of Psyche, which he had long before thrown on canvas in a sketchy manner. It was a pretty little face, well painted, but entirely ideal, cold, consisting of the common features not assumed by a living being. For lack of occupation, he now began to go over it, imparting to it all he had taken note of in his aristocratic sitter. Those features, shadows, tints, which he had noted, made their appearance here in the purified form in which they appear when the painter, after closely observing nature, subordinates himself to her, and produces a creation equal to her own.

Portrait of Psyche
Psyche began to live ; and the scarce dawning thought began, little by little, to clothe itself in a visible form. The type of face of the fashionable young lady was unconsciously communicated to Psyche, and nevertheless she had an

expression of her own which gave it claims to be considered in truth, an original creation. It seemed as if he made use of some things and yet of all that the original suggested to him throughout, and gave himself up entirely to his work. For several days he was engrossed by it alone. And the ladies surprised him at this work on their arrival. He had not time to remove the picture from the easel. Both ladies uttered a cry of amazement, and clasped their hands.

“Lise, Lise! Ah, how like! Superbe, superbe! What a happy thought to drape her in a Greek costume! Ah, what a surprise!”

The artist could not see his way to disabusing the ladies of their pleasant mistake. Shamefacedly, with drooping head, he murmured, “This is Psyche.”

“In the character of Psyche? C’est charmant!” said the mother, smiling, upon which the daughter also smiled. “Confess, Lise, does it not please you to be painted in the character of Psyche better than any other way? Quelle idée délicieuse! But what treatment! It is Correggio himself. I must say, that, although I

had read and heard about you, I did not know you had so much talent. You positively must paint me too." Evidently, the lady wanted to be portrayed as some sort of Psyche also.

"What am I to do with them?" thought the artist. "If they will have it so, why, let Psyche pass for what they choose:" and he said aloud, "Pray sit a little longer: I will touch it up here and there."

"Ah! I am afraid you will . . . it is such a likeness now!"

But the artist understood that the difficulty was with the sallowness, and so he re-assured them by saying that he only wished to give more brilliancy and expression to the eyes. But, in truth, he was ashamed, and wished to impart a little more likeness to the original, lest any one should accuse him of actual barefaced flattery. And, in fact, the features of the pale young girl at length appeared more clearly in Psyche's countenance.

"Enough," said the mother, beginning to fear that the likeness might become too decided. The artist was remunerated in every way, — with smiles, money, compliments, cordial press-

ures of the hand, invitations to dinner: in a word, he received a thousand flattering rewards.

The portrait created a *furor* in the city. The lady exhibited it to her friends: all admired the skill with which the artist had preserved the likeness, and at the same time conferred more beauty on the original. The last remark, of course, was prompted by a slight tinge of envy. And the artist was suddenly overwhelmed with work. It seemed as if the whole city wanted to be painted by him. The door-bell rang incessantly. From one point of view, this might be considered advantageous, as presenting to him endless practice in variety and number of faces. But, unfortunately, they were all people who were hard to get along with, busy, hurried people, or belonging to the fashionable world, consequently more occupied than any one else, and therefore impatient to the last degree. In all quarters, the demand was merely that the likeness should be good and quickly done. The artist perceived that it was a simple impossibility to finish his work; that it was necessary to exchange the power of his treatment for lightness and rapid-

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ity, — to catch only the general, palpable expression, and not waste labor on delicate details — in a word, to copy nature in her finish was utterly out of the question. Moreover, it must be added that nearly all his sitters made many stipulations on various points. The ladies required that mind and character chiefly should be represented in their portraits : that he should make a point of nothing else ; that all angles should be rounded, all unevenness smoothed away, and even removed entirely if possible ; in a word, that their faces should be such as to cause every one to stare with admiration, if not fall in love with outright. And in consequence of this, when they sat to him, they sometimes assumed expressions which greatly amazed the artist : one tried to express melancholy ; another, meditation ; another wanted to make her mouth small on any terms, and puckered it up to such an extent that it finally looked like a spot about as big as a pinhead. And in spite of it all, they demanded of him good likenesses and unconstrained naturalness. And the men were no better than the ladies : one insisted upon being painted with an energetic, muscular turn to his

head ; another, with upturned, inspired eyes ; a lieutenant of the guard demanded that Mars should be visible in his eyes, without fail ; an official in the civil service drew himself up to his full height in order to express his uprightness, his nobility, in his face, and so that his hand might rest upon a book bearing the words in plain characters, "*He always stood up for the right.*" At first such demands threw the artist into a cold perspiration : he had to think it over, to consider ; and there was but very little time for that. Finally he acquired the knack of it, and never troubled himself at all about it. He understood at a word how each wanted himself portrayed. If a man wanted Mars in his face, he put in Mars : he gave a Byronic turn and attitude to those who aimed at Byron. If the ladies wanted to be Corinne, Undine, or Aspasia, he agreed with great readiness, and threw in a sufficient measure of good looks from his own imagination, which, as is well known, does no harm, and for the sake of which an artist is even forgiven a lack of resemblance. He soon began to wonder himself at the rapidity and dash of his brush. And of

course those who sat to him were in ecstasies, and proclaimed him a genius.

Tchartkoff became a fashionable artist in every sense of the word. He began to dine out, to escort ladies to the galleries and even to walk, to dress foppishly, and to assert audibly that an artist should belong to society, that he must uphold his profession, that artists dress like shoemakers, do not know how to behave themselves, do not preserve the highest tone, and are lacking in all polish. At home, in his studio, he carried cleanliness and spotlessness to the last extreme, set up two superb footmen, took foppish pupils, dressed several times a day in various morning costumes, curled his hair, practised various manners of receiving his callers, busied himself in adorning his person in every conceivable way, in order to produce a pleasing impression on the ladies: in a word, it would soon have been impossible for any one to recognize in him the modest artist who had formerly toiled unknown in his miserable quarters in the Vasilievsky Ostroff. He now expressed himself decidedly concerning artists and art; declared that too

much credit had been given to the old masters ; that they all, down to Raphael, painted not figures, but herrings ; that the idea that there was any holiness about them existed only in the minds of the spectators ; that even Raphael did not always paint well, and that fame attached to many of his works, simply by force of tradition ; that Michael Angelo was a braggart because he could boast only a knowledge of anatomy ; that there was no grace about him, and that real brilliancy and power of treatment and coloring were to be looked for only in the present century. And there, naturally, the question touched him personally. “No, I do not understand,” said he, “how others toil and work with difficulty : a man who labors for months over a picture is a dauber, and no artist in my opinion ; I don’t believe he has any talent : genius works boldly, rapidly. Here,” said he, turning generally to his visitors, “is this portrait which I painted in two days, this head in one day, this in a few hours, this in little more than an hour. No, I . . . I confess I do not recognize as art that which adds line to line : that is a trade, not art.” In this manner

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did he lecture his visitors ; and the visitors admired the strength and boldness of his works, even uttered exclamations on hearing how fast they had been produced, and then said to each other, "This is talent, real talent ! see how he speaks, how his eyes gleam. *Il y a quelque chose d'extraordinaire dans toute sa figure !*"

It flattered the artist to hear such reports about himself. When printed praise appeared in the papers, he rejoiced like a child, although this praise was purchased with his money. He carried the printed slips about with him everywhere, showed them to friends and acquaintances as if by accident, and it pleased him to the extent of simple-minded *naïveté*. His fame increased, his works and orders multiplied. Already the same portraits over and over wearied him with the same attitudes and turns, which he had learned by heart. He painted them now without any great interest in the work, trying to make some sort of a head, and giving them to his pupils to finish. At first he had tried to devise a new attitude each time, to surprise with his power and the effect. Now this had grown wearisome to him. His brain

was tired with planning and thinking. It was out of his power, then or ever : his fast life, and society, where he tried to play the part of a man of the world, all this bore him far away from labor and thought. His work grew cold and dim ; and he betook himself with indifference to monotonous, set, well-worn forms. The uniform, cold, eternally spick and span, and, so to speak, buttoned-up faces of the government officials, soldiers, and statesmen, did not offer a wide field for his brush : it forgot superb draperies, and powerful emotion and passion. Of groups, artistic drama and its lofty connections, there was nothing to be said. Before him was only a uniform, a corsage, a dress-coat, in the face of which the artist feels cold, and before which all imagination vanishes. Even his own peculiar merits were no longer visible in his works, yet they continued to enjoy renown ; although genuine *connoisseurs* and artists merely shrugged their shoulders when they saw his latest productions. But some who had known Tchartkoff before, could not understand how the talent of which he had given such clear indications in the beginning, could have

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so vanished; and they strove in vain to divine by what means genius could be extinguished in a man just when he had attained to the full development of his powers.

But the intoxicated artist did not hear these criticisms. He began to attain to the age of dignity, both in mind and years: he began to grow stout, and increase visibly in flesh. He read in the papers phrases with adjectives, "*Our most respected Andrei Petrovitch; our worthy Andrei Petrovitch.*" He began to receive offers of distinguished posts in the service, invitations to examinations and committees. He began, as is usually the case in maturer years, to advocate Raphael and the old masters, not because he had become thoroughly convinced of their transcendent merits, but in order to snub the younger artists. He began, according to the universal custom of those who have attained maturity, to accuse all young men, without exception, of immorality and a vicious turn of mind. He began to believe that every thing in the world simply happens, that there is no higher inspiration, and that every thing should of necessity be brought under one strict rule in the interests of accuracy

and uniformity. In a word, his life already was approaching the verge of the years when every thing which suggests impulse, contracts within a man ; when a powerful chord appeals more feebly to the spirit, and weaves no piercing strains about the heart ; when the touch of beauty no longer converts virgin strength into fire and flame, but all the burnt-out sentiments become more vulnerable to the sound of gold, hearken more attentively to its seductive music, and, little by little, permit themselves to be completely lulled to sleep by it. Fame can give no pleasure to him who has stolen it, not won it : it produces a permanent shock only in the breast of him who is worthy of it. And so all his feelings and impulses turned towards gold. Gold was his passion, his ideal, his fear, his delight, his aim. The bundles of bank-bills increased in his coffers ; and, like all to whose lot falls this fearful gift, he began to grow miserly, inaccessible to every sentiment except the love of gold, a causeless miser, an extravagant amasser, and on the point of becoming one of those strange beings of whom there are many in this unfeeling world, on whom the man full of

life and heart gazes with horror, who regards them as walking stony sepulchres with dead men inside, instead of hearts. But something occurred which gave him a powerful shock, and disturbed the whole tenor of his life.

One day he found upon his table a note, in which the Academy of Painting begged him, as a worthy member of its body, to come and give his opinion upon a new work which had been sent from Italy by a Russian artist who was perfecting himself there. The artist was one of his former comrades, who had been possessed with a passion for art from his earliest years, had given himself up to it with his whole soul, estranged himself from his friends, from his relatives, from his pleasant habits, and had hastened there, where, under a magnificent sky, flourishes a splendid hot-bed of art, to wonderful Rome, at whose very name the artist's heart beats wildly and hotly. There, like an exile, he buried himself in his work and in toil from which he permitted nothing to entice him. He cared not whether his character were talked about, or not, or his ignorance of the art of getting on with people, or his neglect of polite

usages ; nor of the discredit which he cast upon his calling of artist by his poor, old-fashioned dress. It was nothing to him if his brother artists were angry. He neglected every thing, and devoted himself wholly to art. He visited the galleries unweariedly, he stood for hours at a time before the works of the great masters, seizing and studying their marvellous methods. He never finished any thing without revising his impressions several times before these great teachers, and reading in their works silent but eloquent counsels. He entered into no noisy conversations or disputes. He neither advocated nor opposed the purists. He gave each impartially his due, appropriating from all only that which was most beautiful, and finally became the pupil of the divine Raphael alone — as a great poet-artist, after reading many works of various kinds, full of many charms and splendid beauties, at last made Homer's Iliad alone his breviary, having discovered that it contains all one wants, and that there is nothing which is not expressed in it, in deep and grand perfection. And so he brought away from his school the grand conception of creation, the

mighty beauty of thought, the high charm of that heavenly brush.

When Tchartkoff entered the room, he found a great crowd of visitors already collected before the picture. The most profound silence, such as rarely settles upon a throng of critics, reigned over all, on this occasion. He hastened to assume the significant expression of a connoisseur, and approached the picture; but, O God! what did he behold!

X Pure, faultless, beautiful as a bride, stood the picture before him. Modest, reverent, innocent, and simple as a guardian angel, it rose above them all. It seemed as though the divine figures, embarrassed by the many glances directed at them, had dropped their beautiful eyelashes in confusion. The critics regarded the new, hitherto unknown work, with a feeling of involuntary wonder. All seemed united in it, — the art of Raphael, which was reflected in the lofty grace of the grouping; the art of Correggio, breathing from the finished perfection of the workmanship. But more striking than all else was the evident power of creation, still contained in the artist's mind. The very

minutest object in the picture was informed with it; every thing was done with order and inward power; he had caught that melting roundness of outline which is visible in nature only to the artist creator, and which comes out as angles with a copyist. It was plainly to be seen how the artist, having drawn it all from the visible world, had first stored it in his mind, and then had drawn it thence, as from a spiritual source, into one harmonious, triumphant song. And it was evident, even to the uninitiated, how vast a gulf was fixed between creation and a mere copy from nature. It was almost impossible to describe that rare silence which unconsciously overpowered all who cast their eyes on the picture, — not a rustle, not a sound: and the picture seemed more and more noble with every moment that passed; more brilliantly and wonderfully stood forth at length in one instant, — the fruit which had descended from heaven into the artist's mind, — the instant for which all human life is but the preparation. Involuntary tears stood ready to fall in the eyes of those who surrounded the picture. It seemed as though all tastes, all bold, irregular errors of taste,

even, joined in a silent hymn to the divine work.

Motionless, with open mouth, Tchartkoff stood before the picture ; and at length, when by degrees the visitors and critics began to murmur and comment upon the merits of the work, and when at length they turned to him, and begged him to express an opinion, he came to himself once more ; he tried to assume an indifferent, every-day expression ; tried to make some of the commonplace, every-day remarks of hardened artists, in the following style : " Yes, in fact, to tell the truth, it is impossible to deny the artist's talent ; there is something to it ; he evidently tried to express something ; but as to the chief point " . . . and then as a conclusion to this, of course follow praises to such an effect that no artist would have felt flattered by them : he tried to do this ; but the speech died upon his lips, tears and sobs burst forth uncontrollably for answer, and he rushed from the room like one beside himself.

In a moment he stood, deprived of sense and motion, in the middle of his magnificent studio. All his being, all his life, had been

aroused in one instant, as if youth had returned to him, as if the dying sparks of his talent had blazed forth afresh. The bandage suddenly fell from his eyes. Heavens! to think of having mercilessly wasted the best years of his youth, of having extinguished, trodden out perhaps, the spark of fire, which, cherished in his breast, might perhaps have been developed now into magnificence and beauty, and have extorted, too, its meed of tears and admiration! And to have ruined it all, ruined it without pity! It seemed as though suddenly and all together there revived in his soul those impulses, that devotion, which he had known in other days. He seized a brush, and approached his canvas. The perspiration started out upon his face with his efforts: one thought possessed him wholly, one desire consumed him; he tried to depict a fallen angel. This idea was most in harmony with his frame of mind. But alas! his figures, attitudes, groups, thoughts, arranged themselves stiffly, disconnectedly. His hand and his imagination had been too long confined to one groove; and the powerless effort to escape from the bonds

and fetters which he had imposed upon himself, showed itself in irregularities and errors. He had despised the long, wearisome ladder to knowledge, and the first fundamental law of the future great man. He gave vent to his vexation. He ordered all his last productions to be taken out of his studio, all the fashionable, lifeless pictures, all the portraits of hus-sars, ladies, and councillors of state.

He shut himself up alone in his room, would order no food, and devoted himself entirely to his work. He sat toiling like a youth, like a scholar. But how pitifully ignoble was all which proceeded from his hand! He was stopped at every step by his ignorance of the very first principles: the simple ignorance of the mechanical part chilled all inspirations, and formed an impassable barrier to his imagination. His brush returned involuntarily to hackneyed forms: the hands folded themselves in a set attitude; the heads dared not make any unusual turn; the very folds of the garments turned out commonplace, and would not subject themselves or drape themselves to any unaccustomed posture of the body. And he felt, he felt and saw it all himself.

“But had I really any talent?” he said at length: “did not I deceive myself?” And, uttering these words, he turned to his early works, which he had painted so purely, so unselfishly, in former days, in his wretched cabin yonder in lonely Vasilievsky Ostroff, far from people, luxury, and every indulgence. He turned to them now, and began attentively to examine them all; and all the misery of his former life came back to him. “Yes,” he cried despairingly, “I had talent: the signs and traces of it are everywhere visible.” . . .

He paused suddenly, and shivered all over: his eyes encountered eyes fixed immovably upon him. It was that remarkable portrait which he had bought in the Shtchukinui Dvor. All this time it had been covered up, concealed by other pictures, and had utterly gone out of his mind. Now, as if by design, when all the fashionable portraits and paintings had been removed from the studio, it looked forth, together with the productions of his early youth. As he recalled all the strange story; as he remembered that this singular portrait had been, in a manner, the cause of his errors; that the

hoard of money which he had obtained in such peculiar fashion had given birth in his mind to all the wild caprices which had destroyed his talent, — madness was on the point of taking possession of him. On the instant he ordered the hateful portrait to be removed. But his mental excitement was not thereby diminished. Every feeling, his whole being, was shaken to its foundation; and he suffered that fearful torture which is sometimes exhibited in nature, as a striking anomaly, when a feeble talent strives to display itself on a scale too great for it, and cannot display itself, — that torture which in youth gives birth to greatness, but, when revery is carried to too great an extent, is converted into unquenchable thirst, — that fearful torture which renders a man capable of terrible things. A horrible envy took possession of him, envy which bordered on madness. The gall flew to his face when he beheld a work which bore the stamp of talent. He gnashed his teeth, and devoured it with the glare of a basilisk. He conceived the most devilish plan which ever entered into the mind of man, and he hastened with the strength of madness to

carry it into execution. He began to purchase the best which art produced, of every kind. Having bought a picture at a great price, he transported it to his room with care, and flung himself upon it with the ferocity of a tiger, cut it, tore it, chopped it into bits, and stamped upon it, accompanying these proceedings with a grin of delight. The incalculable riches which he had amassed, enabled him to gratify this devilish desire. He opened his bags of gold, and unlocked his coffers. No monster of ignorance ever destroyed so many superb productions of art as did this raging avenger. At any auction where he made his appearance, every one despaired at once of obtaining any work of art. It seemed as if an angry heaven had sent this fearful scourge into the world expressly to destroy all harmony. This terrible passion communicated to him a horrible color: the gall abode permanently in his face. Blame of the world, and scorn of it, were expressed in his countenance. It seemed as though that awful demon were incarnate in him, which Pushkin has described in an ideal manner. His tongue uttered nothing except biting and censorious

words. He swooped down like a harpy into the street; and all, even his acquaintances, catching sight of him in the distance, sought to turn aside and avoid a meeting with him, saying that it poisoned all the rest of the day.

Fortunately for the world and art, such a strained and forced life could not last long: the measure of his passions was too abnormal and colossal for his feeble strength. The attacks of madness began to appear more frequently, and ended at last in the most frightful illness. A violent fever, combined with galloping consumption, seized upon him with such force, that in three days there remained only a shadow of his former self. To this was added indications of hopeless madness. Sometimes several men were unable to hold him. The long-forgotten, living eyes of the remarkable portrait began to torment him, and then his madness became dreadful. All the people who surrounded his bed seemed to him horrible portraits. The portrait doubled and quadrupled itself in his eyes; all the walls seemed hung with portraits, which fastened their living, motionless eyes upon him; horrible portraits

glared at him from the ceiling, from the floor ; the room widened and lengthened endlessly, in order to make room for more of the motionless eyes. The doctor who had undertaken to attend him, having learned something of his strange history, strove with all his might to fathom the secret connection between the visions of his fancy and the occurrences of his life, but without the slightest success. The sick man understood nothing, felt nothing, except his own tortures, and gave utterance only to frightful yells and unintelligible gibberish. At last his life ended in a final attack of unutterable suffering. His corpse was horrible. Nothing could be found of all his great wealth ; but when they beheld the mutilated fragments of all the grand works of art, the value of which exceeded a million, they understood the terrible use which had been made of it.

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PART II.

A THRONG of carriages, droschkis, and calashes stood at the entrance of a house in which an auction sale was going on of the effects belonging to one of those wealthy art-lovers who have dreamed their lives sweetly away, engrossed with Loves and Zephyrs, have innocently passed for Mæcenases, and in a simple-minded fashion expended, to that end, the millions amassed by their thrifty fathers, and frequently even by their own early labors. As is well known, there are no such Mæcenases in existence now; and our nineteenth century long ago acquired the aspect of a parsimonious banker, rejoicing in his millions only in the form of figures jotted down on paper. The long saloon was filled with the most motley throng of visitors, collected like birds of prey swooping down upon an unburied corpse. There was a whole squadron of Russian shop-keepers from the Gostinnui Dvor, and even from the old-clothes mart, in blue coats of foreign make. Their

faces and expressions were a little more sedate here, more natural, and did not display that fictitious desire to serve which is so marked in the Russian shop-keeper when he stands before a customer in his shop. Here they stood upon no ceremony, although the saloons were full of those very aristocrats before whom, in any other place, they would have been ready to sweep, with reverences, the dust brought in by their feet. Here they were quite at their ease, handled pictures and books without ceremony, desirous of ascertaining the value of the goods, and boldly disarranged the prices attached by the connoisseur-Counts. There were many of the infallible attendants of auctions who make it a point to go to one every day as regularly as to take their breakfast; aristocratic connoisseurs, who look upon it as their duty not to miss any opportunity of adding to their collections, and who have no other occupation between twelve o'clock and one; finally those noble gentlemen, with garments and pockets very threadbare, who make their daily appearance without any selfish object in view, but merely to see how it all goes off, — who will

give more, who less, who will outbid the other, and who will get it. A quantity of pictures were lying about in disorder: with them were mingled furniture, and books with possibly the cipher of the former owner, who never was moved by any laudable desire to glance into them. Chinese vases, marble slabs for tables, old and new furniture with curving lines, with griffins, sphinxes, and lions' paws, gilded and ungilded, chandeliers, sconces, — all were heaped together, and not in the order of the shops. It presented a perfect chaos of art. The feeling we generally experience at an auction is a strange one: every thing about it bears some likeness to a funeral procession. The room in which it takes place, is always rather dark, — the windows, piled up with furniture and pictures, admit but scant light: the silence expressed in the faces, and the funereal voice of the auctioneer, the tapping of the hammer and the requiem of the poor arts, met together so strangely here; all this seems to heighten still further the peculiar unpleasantness of the impression.

The auction appeared to be at its height. A

whole throng of respectable people had collected in a group, and were discussing something eagerly. On all sides resounded the words, *rubles, rubles*, giving the auctioneer no time to repeat the added price, which had already reached a sum four times as great as the price announced. The surging throng was competing for a portrait which could not but arrest the attention of all who possessed any knowledge of art. The skilled hand of an artist was plainly visible in it. The portrait had apparently been several times restored and renovated, and presented the dark features of an Asiatic in voluminous garments, with a strange and remarkable expression of countenance ; but what struck the buyers more than all else, was the peculiar liveliness of the eyes. The more the people looked at them, the more did they seem to pierce into each man's heart. This peculiarity, this strange illusion of the artist, attracted the attention of nearly all. Many who had been bidding for it, withdrew because the price had risen to an incredible sum. There remained only two well-known aristocrats, amateurs of painting, who were unwilling to forego such an

Portrait

acquisition. They grew warm, and would, probably, have raised the price to an impossible sum, had not one of the lookers-on suddenly exclaimed, "Permit me to interrupt your competition for a while: I, perhaps, more than any other, have a right to this portrait."

These words at once fixed the attention of all upon him. He was a tall man of thirty-five, with long black curls. His pleasing face, full of a certain bright nonchalance, indicated a soul removed from all wearisome, worldly excitement; his garments made no pretence to fashion: all about him indicated the artist. He was, in fact, B. the painter, personally well known to many of those present.

"However strange my words may seem to you," he continued, perceiving that the general attention was directed to him, "yet, if you consent to listen to a short story, you may possibly see that I was right in uttering them. Everything assures me that this is the portrait which I am looking for."

A very natural curiosity illumined the faces of nearly all; and even the auctioneer paused as he was opening his mouth, and with hammer

uplifted in the air, prepared to listen. At the beginning of the story, many glanced involuntarily towards the portrait; but later on, all bent their attention solely on the narrator, as his tale grew gradually more absorbing.

“You know that portion of the city which is called Kolomna,” he began. “There every thing is unlike any thing else in Petersburg: there it is neither capital nor provinces. It seems, you know, when you traverse those streets, as though all youthful desires and impulses deserted you. Thither the future never comes, all is peace and desolation, all that has fallen away from the movement of the capital. Retired tchinovniks¹ remove thither to live; widows; people not very well off, who have acquaintance in the senate, and therefore condemn themselves to this for nearly the whole of their lives; retired cooks, who gossip all day at the markets, talk nonsense with the muzhiks in the petty shops, purchasing each day five kopeks’ worth of coffee, and four of sugar; and, in short, that whole list of people who can be described by the one word *ash-colored*, — people whose gar-

¹ Officials.

ments, faces, hair, eyes, have a sort of troubled, ashy surface, like a day when there is in the sky neither cloud nor sun, but it is simply neither one thing nor the other: the mist settles down, and robs every object of its distinctness. Among them may be reckoned retired theatrical servants, retired titular councillors, retired sons of Mars, with ruined eyes and swollen lips. These people are utterly passionless. They walk along without glancing at any thing, and maintain silence without thinking of any thing. There are not many possessions in their chambers, — sometimes merely a stoup of pure Russian vodka, which they absorb monotonously all day long, without its having any marked tendency to affect their heads, caused by a strong dose such as the young German mechanic loves to treat himself to on Sundays, — that bully of Myeshtchanskaya Street, sole controller of all the sidewalks after twelve o'clock at night.

“Life in Kolomna is terribly lonely: rarely does a carriage appear, except, perhaps, one containing an actor, which disturbs the universal stillness by its rumble, noise, and jingling.

There all are — pedestrians : the izvoshtchik frequently loiters along, carrying hay for his shaggy little horse. You can get lodgings for five rubles a month, coffee in the morning included. Widows with pensions are the most aristocratic families there ; they conduct themselves well, sweep their rooms often, chatter with their friends about the dearness of beef and cabbage ; they frequently have a young daughter, — a taciturn, quiet, sometimes pretty creature, — an ugly little dog, and wall-clocks which strike in a melancholy fashion. Then come the actors whose salaries do not permit them to desert Kolomna, an independent folk, living, like all artists, for pleasure. They sit in their dressing-gowns, cleaning their pistols, glueing together all sorts of things out of cardboard, which are useful about a house, playing checkers and cards with any friend who chances to drop in, and so pass away the morning, doing pretty nearly the same in the evening, with the addition of punch now and then. After these great people and aristocracy of Kolomna, come the rank and file. It is as difficult to put a name to them as to number the multitude of

insects which breed in stale vinegar. There are old women who get drunk, who make a living by incomprehensible means, like ants, drag old clothes and rags from the Kalinkin Bridge to the old-clothes mart, in order to sell them there for fifteen kopeks,—in a word, the very dregs of mankind, whose condition no beneficent, political economist has devised any means of ameliorating.

“I have enumerated them in order to show you how often such people find themselves under the necessity of seeking immediate temporary assistance, of having recourse to borrowing; and there settles among them a peculiar race of money-lenders who lend small sums on security at an enormous percentage. These petty usurers are sometimes more heartless than the great ones, because they penetrate into the midst of poverty, and sharply displayed beggarly rags, which the rich usurer, who has dealings only with carriage-customers, never sees,—and because every feeling of humanity, too, soon dies within them. Among these usurers was a certain . . . but I must not omit to mention that the occurrence which I have under-

taken to relate, refers to the last century; namely, to the reign of our late Empress Ekaterina the Second. You will understand that the very appearance and life of Kolomna must have changed materially. So, among the usurers was a certain person, — an extraordinary being in every respect, who had settled in that quarter of the city long before. He went about in voluminous Asiatic attire; his dark complexion pointed to a Southern origin; but to what particular nation he belonged, — India, Greece, or Persia, — no one could say with certainty. Of tall, almost colossal stature, with dark, thin, glowing face, and an indescribably strange color in his large eyes of unwonted fire, with heavy, overhanging brows, he differed sharply and strongly from all the ash-colored denizens of the capital.

“His very dwelling was unlike the other small wooden houses. It was of stone, in the style of those formerly much affected by Genoese merchants, with irregular windows of various sizes, with iron shutters and bars. This usurer differed from other usurers also in that he could furnish any required sum, from that desired by

the poor old beggar-woman to that demanded by the extravagant court grandee. The most gorgeous equipages often showed themselves in front of his house, and from their windows sometimes peeped forth the head of an elegant lady of society. Rumor, as usual, reported that his iron coffers were full of untold gold, treasures, diamonds, and all sorts of pledges, but that, nevertheless, he was not the slave of that avarice which is characteristic of other usurers. He lent money willingly, stipulating very favorable terms of payment, so it appeared, but, by some curious method of reckoning, made them amount to an incredible percentage. So said rumor, at least. But what was strangest of all, and could not fail to strike many, was the peculiar fate of all who received money from him: all ended their lives in some unhappy way. Whether this was simply the popular opinion, stupid, superstitious rumors, or reports circulated with an object, is not known. But several instances which happened within a brief space of time before the eyes of all, were vivid and striking.

“Among the aristocracy of that day, the one

who speedily attracted to himself the eyes of all was a young man of one of the best families, distinguished also in his early years in court-circles, a warm admirer of all true and noble things, zealous for all which art or the mind of man produced, and giving promise of becoming a Mæcenas. He was soon deservedly distinguished by the Empress, who conferred upon him an important post, fully proportioned to his desires, — a post in which he could accomplish much for science and the general welfare. The youthful dignitary surrounded himself with artists, poets, and learned men. He wished to give work to all, to encourage all. He undertook, at his own expense, a number of useful publications; gave many orders; proclaimed many prizes for the encouragement of different arts; spent a great deal of money, and finally ruined himself. But, full of noble impulses, he did not wish to relinquish his work, sought a loan everywhere, and finally betook himself to the well-known usurer. Having effected a considerable loan from him, the man changed completely in a short time: he became a persecutor and oppressor of budding talent and intellect.

He saw the bad side in every publication, and every word he uttered was false. Then, unfortunately, came the French Revolution. This furnished him with an excuse for every sort of suspicion. He began to discover a revolutionary tendency in every thing: he encountered hints in every thing. He became suspicious to such a degree, that he began, finally, to suspect himself; began to concoct terrible and unjust accusations, made scores of people unhappy. Of course, such conduct could not fail, in time, to reach the throne. The kind-hearted Empress was shocked; and, full of the noble spirit which adorns crowned heads, she uttered words which, although they could not descend to us in all their sharpness, have yet preserved the memory of their deepest meaning engraven on many hearts. The Empress remarked, that not under a monarchical government were the high and noble impulses of souls persecuted; not there were the creations of intellect, poetry, and art contemned and oppressed; that, on the other hand, monarchs alone were their protectors; that Shakspeare and Molière flourished under their magnanimous protection, while Dante

could not find a corner in his republican birth-place; that true geniuses arise in the period of brilliancy and power of emperors and empires, but not in the time of monstrous political apparitions and republican terrorism, which, up to that time, had never given to the world a single poet; that poet-artists should be marked out for favor, for peace, and divine quiet alone compose their minds, not excitement and tumult; that learned men, poets, and all producers of art, are the pearls and diamonds in the imperial crown: by them is the epoch of the great ruler adorned, and from them it receives yet greater brilliancy. In a word, when the Empress uttered these words, she was divinely beautiful for the moment. I remember old men who could not speak of it without tears. All were interested in the affair. It must be remarked, to the honor of our national pride, that in the Russian's heart there always beats a fine feeling that he must adopt the part of the persecuted. The dignitary who had betrayed his trust was punished in an exemplary manner, and degraded from his post. But he read a much more dreadful punishment in the faces of

his fellow-countrymen: this was a sharp and universal scorn. It is impossible to describe what that vain-glorious soul suffered: pride, betrayed self-love, ruined hopes, all united, and he died in a terrible attack of raving madness.

“Another striking example occurred also in view of all: among the beauties in which our Northern capital is assuredly not poor, one decidedly surpassed all the rest. Her loveliness was a combination of our Northern charms with the charms of the South, — a brilliant such as rarely makes its appearance on earth. My father admitted that he had never beheld any thing like it in the whole course of his life. Every thing seemed to be united in her, — wealth, intellect, and spiritual charms. She had throngs of admirers; and the most distinguished of them all was Prince R., the most noble-minded, the best, of all young men, the finest in face, and in his magnanimous and knightly sentiments the grand ideal of romance and women, a Grandison in every acceptation of the term. Prince R. was passionately and desperately in love: he was requited by a like

ardent passion. But the match seemed unequal to the parents. The prince's family estates had not been in his possession for a long time, his family was out of favor, and the sad state of his affairs was well known to all. Of a sudden the prince quitted the capital, as if for the purpose of arranging his affairs, and after a short interval re-appeared, surrounded with luxury and incredible splendor. Brilliant balls and parties made him known at court. The beauty's father began to relent, and a most interesting wedding took place in the city. Whence this change in circumstances, this unheard-of wealth of the bridegroom, came, no one could fully explain; but it was whispered that he had entered into a compact with the mysterious usurer, and had borrowed money of him. However that may have been, the wedding was a source of interest to the whole city, and the bride and bridegroom were the objects of general envy. Every one knew of their warm and faithful love, the long persecution they had had to endure from every quarter, the great personal worth of both. Ardent women at once sketched out the heavenly bliss which

*Princess
Prince
The usurer*

the young couple would enjoy. But it turned out very differently.

“In the course of a year a frightful change came over the husband. His character, up to that time so fine and noble, became poisoned with jealous suspicions, irritability, and inexhaustible caprices. He became a tyrant and persecutor to his wife, — something which no one could have foreseen, — and indulged in the most inhuman deeds, even in blows. In a year’s time, no one would have recognized the woman who such a little while before had shone, and drawn about her throngs of submissive adorers. Finally, no longer able to endure her heavy lot, she proposed a divorce. Her husband flew into a rage at the very suggestion. In the first burst of passion, he chased her about the room with a knife, and would doubtless have murdered her then and there, if they had not seized him and prevented him. In a burst of madness and despair he turned the knife against himself, and ended his life amid the most horrible sufferings.

“Besides these two instances which occurred before the eyes of all the world, stories circu-

lated of a great number which took place among the lower classes, nearly all of which had tragic endings. Here an honest, sober man became a drunkard ; there a shop-keeper's clerk robbed his master ; again, an izvoshtchik who had conducted himself properly for a number of years, cut his passenger's throat for a groschen. It was impossible that such occurrences, related, too, sometimes not without embellishments, should not inspire a sort of involuntary horror in the sedate inhabitants of Kolomna. No one cherished any doubt as to the presence of an evil power in this man. They said that he imposed conditions which made the hair rise on one's head, and which the miserable wretch never afterward dared reveal to any other being ; that his money possessed a power of attraction ; that it grew hot of itself, and that it bore strange marks. . . . In short, many were the silly stories in circulation. And it is worthy of remark, that all this colony of Kolomna, this whole race of poor old women, petty officials, petty artists, and, in a word, all the insignificant people whom we have just recapitulated, agreed that it was

better to endure any thing, and to suffer the extreme of misery, rather than to have recourse to the terrible usurer: old women were even found dying of hunger, who preferred to kill their bodies rather than lose their souls. Those who met him in the street felt an involuntary fear. Pedestrians took care to turn aside from his path, and gazed long after the extremely tall, receding figure. In his face alone, there was enough that was uncommon to cause any one to ascribe to him a supernatural nature. The strong features, so deeply chiselled, not seen in many men; the glowing bronze of his complexion; the incredible thickness of his brows; the intolerable, terrible eyes; even the wide folds of his Asiatic garment, — every thing seemed to indicate that all passions of other people were pale compared to the passions raging in that body. My father stopped short every time he met him, and could not refrain each time from saying, ‘A devil, a perfect devil!’ But I must introduce you as speedily as possible to my father, who, with others, is the chief character in this story.

“My father was a remarkable man in many

respects. He was an artist of rare ability, a self-taught artist, seeking in his own soul, without teachers or schools, principles and rules, carried away only by the thirst for perfection, and treading a path indicated by his own instincts, for reasons unknown, perchance, even to himself, — one of those natural marvels whom their contemporaries often honor with the insulting title of *fools*, and who are chilled neither by blame nor their own lack of success, who gain only fresh vigor, and, in their own minds, have gone far beyond those works on account of which they have received the name of fools. Through some lofty and secret instinct he perceived the presence of a soul in every object ; he embraced, by his unaided mind, the true significance of the words, *historical painting* ; he comprehended why a simple head, a simple portrait by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Correggio, can be considered an historical painting, and why a huge picture with historical subject remains, nevertheless, a *genre* picture, in spite of all the artist's pretensions to historical painting. And this secret instinct and personal conviction turned his brush to Christian

subjects, grand and lofty to the last degree. He had none of the vanity or irritability so inseparable from the character of many artists. His was a strong character: he was an honorable, upright, even rough man, covered with a sort of hard rind without, not entirely lacking in pride, and given to expressing himself both sharply and scornfully about people. 'What are they looking at?' he generally said. 'I am not working for them. I don't carry my pictures to the tavern. He who understands me is grateful. The man of the world is not to blame that he understands nothing about painting; but he does understand cards, and he knows good wine and horses; — why should a gentleman know more? Observe, if you please, how he tries one, and then another, and then begins to consider, when his living does not depend upon it. Let every man attend to his own affairs. To my mind, that man is the best of all who says frankly that he does not understand a thing, rather than the man who pretends, talks as though he knew a thing he does not know, and is simply disgusting and intolerable.' He worked for very small pay; that is to say, for

just enough to support his family, and obtain the tools to work with. Moreover, he never, under any circumstances, refused to aid any one, or to lend a helping hand to a poor artist : he believed with the simple, reverent faith of his ancestors ; and from that cause, it may be, that noble expression which even brilliant talents cannot acquire, showed itself in the faces he painted. At length, by his unintermitting labor, and perseverance in the path he had marked out for himself, he began to win the approbation of those who honored his folly and his self-taught talent. They gave him constant orders for churches, and he never lacked employment. One of his paintings possessed a strong interest for him. I no longer recall the precise subject : I only know that he needed to represent the Spirit of Darkness in it. He pondered long what form to give him : he wished to concentrate in his face all that weighs down and oppresses a man. In the midst of his meditations, there suddenly occurred to his mind the image of the mysterious usurer ; and he thought involuntarily, ‘ That’s what I ought to paint for the Devil ! ’ Imagine his amaze-

ment when one day, as he was at work in his studio, he heard a knock at the door, and directly after there entered that very same terrible usurer. He could not repress an inward shudder, which involuntarily traversed every limb.

“‘You are an artist?’ he said to my father abruptly.

“‘I am,’ answered my father in surprise, waiting for what should come next.

“‘Good! Paint my portrait. I may possibly die soon. I have no children; but I do not wish to die completely, I wish to live. Can you paint a portrait that shall be as though it lived?’

“My father reflected, ‘What could be better? he offers himself for the Devil in my picture.’ He promised. They agreed upon a time and price; and the next day my father took palette and brushes, and went to his house. The lofty court-yard, dogs, iron doors and locks, arched windows, coffered drapery with strange covers, and, last of all, the remarkable owner himself, seated motionless before him, all produced a strange impression on him. The

Windows seemed intentionally barred, and so encumbered below that they admitted the light only from the top. 'Devil take him, how well his face is lighted!' he said to himself, and began to paint assiduously, as though afraid that the favorable light would disappear. 'What strength!' he repeated to himself. 'If I make half a likeness of him, as he is just now, it will surpass all my other works: he will simply start from the canvas if I am only partly true to nature. What remarkable features!' he kept repeating, redoubling his energy; and he began himself to see how some traits were making their appearance on the canvas. But the more closely he approached him, the more conscious he became of an aggressive, uneasy feeling, which he could not explain to himself. But, notwithstanding this, he set himself to copy with literal accuracy every slightest trait and expression. First of all, however, he busied himself with the eyes. There was so much force in those eyes, that it seemed impossible to reproduce them exactly as they were in nature. But he resolved, at any price, to seek in them the most minute

characteristics and shades, to penetrate the secret. . . . But as soon as he approached them, and began to redouble his exertions, there sprang up in his mind such a terrible feeling of repulsion, of inexplicable oppression, that he was forced to lay aside his brush for a while, and begin anew. At last he could bear it no longer: he felt as if those eyes were piercing into his soul, and causing intolerable emotion. On the second and third days this became still stronger. It became horrible to him. He threw down his brush, and declared abruptly that he could paint him no longer. You should have seen how the terrible usurer changed countenance at these words. He threw himself at his feet, and besought him to finish the portrait, saying that his fate and his existence in the world depended on it; that he had already caught his prominent features; that if he could reproduce them accurately, his life would be preserved in his portrait, in a supernatural manner; that by that means he would not die completely; that it was necessary for him to continue to exist in the world.

“My father was frightened by these words:

they seemed to him strange and terrible to such a degree, that he threw down his brushes and palette, and rushed headlong from the room.

“The memory of it troubled him all day and all night; but the next morning he received the portrait from the usurer, brought by a woman who was the only creature in his service, who announced that her master did not want the portrait, would pay nothing for it, and had sent it back. On the evening of the same day he learned that the usurer was dead, and that preparations were in progress to bury him according to the rites of his religion. All this seemed to him inexplicably strange. But from that day a marked change showed itself in his character. He was possessed by a troubled, uneasy feeling, of which he was unable to explain the cause; and he soon committed a deed which no one could have expected of him. For some time the works of one of his pupils had been attracting the attention of a small circle of connoisseurs and amateurs. My father had perceived his talent, and manifested a particular liking for him in consequence. Suddenly he became envious of him. The general

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Portrait

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interest in him and talk about him became unendurable to my father. Finally, to complete his vexation, he learned that his pupil had been asked to paint a picture for a recently built and wealthy church. This enraged him. 'No, I will not permit that fledgling to triumph!' said he: 'it is early, friend, to think of consigning the old men to the gutters. I still have powers, God be praised! We'll soon see which will put down the other.' And the straightforward, honorable man employed intrigues and plots which he had hitherto abhorred. He finally contrived that there should be a competition for the picture which other artists were permitted to enter into with their works. Then he shut himself up in his room, and grasped his brush with zeal. It seemed as if he were striving to summon all his strength for this occasion. And, in fact, it turned out to be one of his best works. No one doubted that he would bear off the palm. The pictures were placed on exhibition, and all the others seemed to his as night to day. Then, of a sudden, one of the members present, an ecclesiastical personage if I mistake not, made a remark which surprised

every one. 'There is certainly much talent in this artist's picture,' said he, 'but no holiness in the faces: there is even, on the contrary, a sort of demoniacal look in the eyes, as though some evil feeling had guided the artist's hand.' All looked, and could not but acknowledge the truth of the words. My father rushed forward to his picture, as though to verify for himself this offensive remark, and perceived with horror that he had bestowed the usurer's eyes upon nearly all the figures. They had such an annihilatingly diabolical gaze, that he involuntarily shuddered. The picture was rejected; and he was forced to hear, to his indescribable vexation, that the palm was awarded to his pupil. It is impossible to describe the state of rage in which he returned home. He almost killed my mother, he drove the children away, broke his brushes and easels, tore down the usurer's portrait from the wall, demanded a knife, and ordered a fire built in the chimney, intending to cut it in pieces and burn it. A friend, an artist, caught him in the act as he entered the room, — a jolly fellow, like my father, always satisfied with himself, inflated by no unattain-

able wishes, doing daily any thing that came to hand, and taking still more gayly to his dinner and little carouses.

“ ‘What are you doing? What are you preparing to burn?’ he asked, and stepped up to the portrait. ‘Why, this is one of your very best works. This is the usurer who died a short time ago: yes, it is a most perfect thing. You did not stop until you had got into his very eyes. Never in life did eyes look as these of yours do now.’

“ ‘Well, I’ll see how they look in the fire!’ said my father, making a movement to fling the portrait into the grate.

“ ‘Stop, for Heaven’s sake!’ exclaimed his friend, restraining him: ‘give it to me, rather, if it offends your eyes to such a degree.’ My father began to insist, but yielded at length; and the jolly fellow, well pleased with his acquisition, carried the portrait home with him.

“When he was gone, my father felt more calm. The burden seemed to have disappeared from his soul together with the portrait. He was surprised himself at his evil feelings, his envy, and the evident change in his character. Reviewing

his acts, he became sad at heart ; and not without inward sorrow did he exclaim, ‘No, it was God who punished me ! my picture, in fact, brought disgrace. It was meant to ruin my brother-man. A devilish feeling of envy guided my brush, and that devilish feeling must have made itself visible in it.’ He set out at once to seek his former pupil, embraced him warmly, begged his forgiveness, and endeavored as far as possible to excuse his own fault. His labors continued, as before, undisturbed ; but his face more frequently was thoughtful. He prayed more, grew more taciturn, and expressed himself less sharply about people : even the rough exterior of his character was modified to some extent. But a certain occurrence soon disturbed him more than ever. He had seen nothing for a long time of the comrade who had begged the portrait of him. He had already decided to hunt him up, when the latter suddenly made his appearance in his room. After a few words and questions on both sides, he said, ‘Well, brother, it was not without cause that you wished to burn that portrait. Devil take it, there’s something horrible about it ! . . . I

*Portrait
offered
his
friend*

don't believe in sorcerers; but, begging your pardon, there's an unclean spirit in it.' . . .

" 'How so?' asked my father.

" 'Well, from the very moment I hung it up in my room, I felt such depression . . . just as if I wanted to murder some one. I never knew in my life what sleeplessness was; but now I suffer not from sleeplessness alone, but from such dreams! . . . I cannot tell whether they are dreams, or what; it is as if a kobold [*domo-voi*] were strangling one: and the old man appears to me in my sleep. In short, I can't describe my state of mind. I never had anything of the sort before. I have been wandering about miserably all the time: I have had a sensation of fear, of expecting something unpleasant. I have felt as if I could not speak a cheerful or sincere word to any one: it is just as if a spy were sitting over me. And from the very hour that I gave that portrait to my nephew, who asked for it, I felt as if a stone had been rolled from my shoulders: I immediately felt cheerful, as you see me now. Well, brother, you made the very Devil!'

"During this recital, my father listened with

unswerving attention, and finally inquired, 'And your nephew now has the portrait?'

" 'My nephew, indeed! he could not stand it!' said the jolly fellow: 'do you know, the soul of that usurer has migrated into it; he jumps out of the frame, walks about the room; and what my nephew tells of him is simply incomprehensible. I should take him for a lunatic, if I had not undergone a part of it myself. He sold it to some collector of pictures; and he could not stand it either, and got rid of it to some one else.'

"This story produced a deep impression on my father. He became seriously pensive, fell into hypochondria, and finally became fully convinced that his brush had served as a tool of the Devil; that a portion of the usurer's life had actually passed into the portrait, and was now troubling people, inspiring diabolical excitement, beguiling painters from the true path, producing the fearful torments of envy, and so forth, and so forth. Three catastrophes which occurred afterwards, three sudden deaths of wife, daughter, and infant son, he regarded as a divine punishment on him, and firmly resolved

to leave the world. As soon as I was nine years old, he placed me in an academy of painting, and, paying all his debts, retired to a lonely cloister, where he soon afterwards took the vows. There he amazed every one by the strictness of his life, and his untiring observance of all the monastic rules. The prior of the monastery, hearing of his skill in painting, ordered him to paint the principal ikon in the church. But the humble brother said plainly that he was unworthy to touch a brush, that his was contaminated, that with toil and great sacrifice must he first purify his spirit in order to render himself fit to undertake such a task. They did not care to force him. He increased the rigors of monastic life for himself as much as possible. At last, even it became insufficient, and not strict enough for him. He retired, with the approval of the prior, into the desert, in order to be quite alone. There he constructed for himself a cell from branches of trees, ate only uncooked roots, dragged about a stone from place to place, stood in one spot with his hands lifted to heaven, from the rising until the going-down of the sun, reciting prayers without cessation :

in short, he underwent, it seemed, every possible degree of suffering and of that pitiless self-abnegation, of which instances can perhaps be found in some Lives of the Saints. In this manner did he long — for several years — exhaust his body, invigorating it, at the same time, with the strength of fervent prayer. At length, one day he came to the cloister, and said firmly to the prior, ‘Now I am ready. If God wills, I will finish my task.’ The subject he selected was the Birth of Christ. A whole year he sat over it, without leaving his cell, barely sustaining himself with coarse food, and praying incessantly. At the end of the year the picture was ready. It was a really wonderful work. You must know, that neither prior nor brethren knew much about painting; but all were struck with the marvellous holiness of the figures. The expression of reverent humility and gentleness in the face of the Holy Mother, as she bent over the Child; the deep intelligence in the eyes of the Holy Child, as though he saw something afar; the triumphant silence of the Magi, amazed by the Divine Miracle, as they bowed at his feet; and finally, the indescribable

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agrees
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peace which informed the whole picture, — all this was presented with such even strength and powerful beauty, that the impression it made was magical. All the brethren threw themselves on their knees before the new ikon; and the prior, deeply affected, exclaimed, ‘No, it is impossible for any artist, with the assistance only of earthly art, to produce such a picture: a holy, divine power guided thy brush, and the blessing of Heaven rested upon thy labor!’

“By that time I had completed my education at the academy, received the gold medal, and with it the joyful hope of a journey to Italy, — the fairest dream of a twenty-year-old artist. It only remained for me to take leave of my father, from whom I had been separated for twelve years. I confess that even his image had long faded from my memory. I had heard somewhat of his grim saintliness, and rather expected to meet a hermit of rough exterior, a stranger to every thing in the world, except his cell and his prayers, worn out, dried up, by eternal fasting and penance. But how great was my surprise, when a handsome, almost divine, old man stood before me! And no traces of

exhaustion were visible on his countenance: it beamed with the light of a heavenly joy. His beard, white as snow, and his thin, almost transparent hair of the same silvery hue, fell picturesquely upon his breast, and upon the folds of his black gown, and even to the rope with which his poor monastic garb was girded. But most surprising to me of all, was to hear from his mouth such words and thoughts about art, as, I confess, I long shall bear in mind, and I sincerely wish that all my comrades would do the same.

“‘I expected you, my son,’ he said, when I approached for his blessing. ‘The path awaits you, in which your life is henceforth to flow. Your path is pure, — desert it not. You have talent: talent is the most priceless of God’s gifts, — destroy it not. Search out, learn all you see, subject all things to your brush; but in all, see that you find the hidden soul, and most of all, strive to attain to the grand secret of creation. Blessed is the elect one, who masters that! There is for him, no mean object in nature. In lowly themes, the artist creator is as great as in great ones: in the despicable, there

is nothing for him to despise ; for the glorious mind of the creator penetrates it, and the despicable has received a lofty significance, for it has passed through the purifying fire of his mind. An intimation of God's heavenly paradise is contained for the artist, in art, and by that alone is it higher than all else. But by as much as triumphant rest is grander than every earthly emotion ; by as much as the angel, pure in the innocence of its bright spirit, is above all invisible powers and the proud passions of Satan, — by just so much is the lofty creation of art higher than every thing else on earth. Sacrifice every thing to it, and love it with passion, — not with the passion breathing with earthly desire, but a peaceful, heavenly passion. Without it a man is not capable of elevating himself above the earth, and cannot produce wondrous sounds of soothing ; for the grand creations of art descend into the world in order to soothe and reconcile all. It cannot plant discord in the spirit, but ascends, like a resounding prayer, eternally to God. But there are moments, dark moments' . . . he paused, and I observed that his bright face darkened, as

though some cloud crossed it for a moment. 'There is one incident of my life,' he said. 'Up to this moment, I cannot understand what that terrible figure was, of which I painted a likeness. It was certainly some diabolical apparition. I know that the world denies the existence of the Devil, and therefore I will not speak of him. I will only say that I painted him with repugnance: I felt no liking for my work, even at the time. I tried to force myself, and, stifling every emotion in a hard-hearted way, to be true to nature. It was not a creation of art: and therefore the feelings which overpower every one who looks at it, are feelings of repulsion, disturbing emotions, not the feelings of an artist; for an artist infuses peace into commotion. I have been informed that this portrait is passing from hand to hand, and sowing unpleasant impressions, inspiring artists with feelings of envy, of dark hatred towards their brethren, with malicious thirst for persecution and oppression. May the Almighty preserve you from such passions! There is nothing more terrible. It is better to endure the bitterness of all possible persecution than to subject

any one to even the shadow of persecution. Preserve the purity of your mind. He who possesses talent should be purer than all others. Much is forgiven to another which is not forgiven to him. A man who has emerged from his house in brilliant, festive garments, has but to be spattered with a single drop of mud from a wheel, and people surround him, and point the finger at him, and talk of his want of cleanliness; while the same people do not perceive the multitude of spots upon other passers-by, who are clothed in ordinary garments, for spots are not visible on ordinary garments.'

"He blessed and embraced me. Never in my life was I so grandly moved. Reverently, rather than with the feeling of a son, I leaned upon his breast, and kissed his scattered silver locks.

"Tears shone in his eyes. 'Fulfil my one request, my son,' said he, at the moment of parting. 'You may chance to see the portrait I have mentioned, somewhere. You will know it at once by the strange eyes, and their peculiar expression. Destroy it at any cost.' . . .

"Judge for yourselves whether I could refuse to promise, with an oath, to fulfil this request.

In the space of fifteen years, I had never succeeded in meeting with any thing which in any way corresponded to the description given me by my father, until now, all of a sudden, at an auction " . . .

The artist did not finish his sentence, but turned his eyes to the wall in order to glance once more at the portrait. The whole throng of his auditors made the same movement, seeking the wonderful portrait with their eyes. But, to their extreme amazement, it was no longer on the wall. An indistinct murmur and exclamation ran through the crowd, and then was heard distinctly the word, *stolen*. Some one had succeeded in carrying it off, taking advantage of the fact that the attention of the spectators was distracted by the story. And those present remained long in a state of surprise, not knowing whether they had really seen those remarkable eyes, or whether it was simply a dream, which had floated for an instant before their vision, strained with long gazing at old pictures.

THE CLOAK.¹

IN the department of . . . but it is better not to name the department. There is nothing more irritable than all kinds of departments, regiments, courts of justice, and, in a word, every branch of public service. Each separate man nowadays thinks all society insulted in his person. They say that, quite recently, a complaint was received from a justice of the peace, in which he plainly demonstrated that all the imperial institutions were going to the dogs, and that his sacred name was being taken in vain ; and in proof he appended to the complaint a huge volume of some romantic composition, in which the justice of the peace appears about once in every ten lines, sometimes in a drunken condition. Therefore, in order to avoid all unpleasantness, it will be better for us

¹ From the series of St. Petersburg tales.

to designate the department in question as *a certain department*. So, *in a certain department* serves *a certain tchinovnik* (*official*), — not a very prominent official, it must be allowed, — short of stature, somewhat pock-marked, rather red-haired, rather blind, judging from appearances, with a small bald spot on his forehead, with wrinkles on his cheeks, with a complexion of the sort called sanguine. . . . How could he help it? The Petersburg climate was responsible for that. As for his *tchin* (rank), — for with us the rank must be stated first of all, — he was what is called a perpetual titular councillor, over which, as is well known, some writers make merry and crack their jokes, as they have the praiseworthy custom of attacking those who cannot bite back.

His family name was Bashmatchkin. It is evident from the name, that it originated in *bashmak* (shoe); but when, at what time, and in what manner, is not known. His father and grandfather, and even his brother-in-law, and all the Bashmatchkins, always wore boots, and only had new heels two or three times a year. His name was Akakiy Akakievitch. It may

strike the reader as rather singular and far-fetched; but he may feel assured that it was by no means far-fetched, and that the circumstances were such that it would have been impossible to give him any other name; and this was how it came about. Akakiy Akakievitch was born, if my memory fails me not, towards night on the 23d of March. His late mother, the wife of a tchinovnik, and a very fine woman, made all due arrangements for having the child baptized. His mother was lying on the bed opposite the door: on her right stood the godfather, a most estimable man, Ivan Ivanovitch Eroshkin, who served as presiding officer of the senate; and the godmother, the wife of an officer of the quarter, a woman of rare virtues, Anna Semenovna Byelobrushkova. They offered the mother her choice of three names, — Mokiya, Sossiya, or that the child should be called after the martyr Khozdazat. “No,” pronounced the blessed woman, “all those names are poor.” In order to please her, they opened the calendar at another place: three more names appeared, — Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy. “This is a judgment,” said the

old woman. "What names! I truly never heard the like. Varadat or Varukh might have been borne, but not Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!" They turned another page — Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy. "Now I see," said the old woman, "that it is plainly fate. And if that's the case, it will be better to name him after his father. His father's name was Akakiy, so let his son's be also Akakiy." In this manner he became Akakiy Akakievitch. They christened the child, whereat he wept, and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor. In this manner did it all come about. We have mentioned it, in order that the reader might see for himself that it happened quite as a case of necessity, and that it was utterly impossible to give him any other name. When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation, — the same official for letters; so that afterwards it was affirmed that he had been born in undress uniform with a bald

spot on his head. No respect was shown him in the department. The janitor not only did not rise from his seat when he passed, but never even glanced at him, as if only a fly had flown through the reception-room. His superiors treated him in a coolly despotic manner. Some assistant chief would thrust a paper under his nose without so much as saying, "Copy," or, "Here's a nice, interesting matter," or any thing else agreeable, as is customary in well-bred service. And he took it, looking only at the paper, and not observing who handed it to him, or whether he had the right to do so : he simply took it, and set about copying it. The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted ; recounted there in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy ; they said that she beat him ; asked when the wedding was to be ; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, as though there had been no one before him. It even had no effect upon his employment : amid all these molestations

he never made a single mistake in a letter. But if the joking became utterly intolerable, as when they jogged his hand, and prevented his attending to his work, he would exclaim, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" And there was something strange in the words and the voice in which they were uttered. There was in it a something which moved to pity; so that one young man, lately entered, who, taking pattern by the others, had permitted himself to make sport of him, suddenly stopped short, as though all had undergone a transformation before him, and presented itself in a different aspect. Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were well-bred and polite men. And long afterwards, in his gayest moments, there came to his mind the little official with the bald forehead, with the heart-rending words, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" And in these penetrating words, other words resounded, — "I am thy brother." And the poor young man covered his face with his hand; and many a time afterwards, in the course of his life,

he shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed in delicate, refined worldliness, and, O God! even in that man whom the world acknowledges as honorable and noble.

It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties. It is saying but little to say that he served with zeal: no, he served with love. In that copying, he saw a varied and agreeable world. Enjoyment was written on his face: some letters were favorites with him; and when he encountered them, he became unlike himself; he smiled and winked, and assisted with his lips, so that it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his own surprise, have been made even a councillor of state. But he served, as his companions, the wits, put it, like a buckle in a button-hole.

Moreover, it is impossible to say that no attention was paid to him. One director being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given

something more important than mere copying ; namely, he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair, to another court : the matter consisted simply in changing the heading, and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil, that he was all in a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, “ No, give me rather something to copy.” After that they let him copy on forever. Outside this copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him. He thought not at all of his clothes : his undress uniform was not green, but a sort of rusty-meal color. The collar was narrow, low, so that his neck, in spite of the fact that it was not long, seemed inordinately long as it emerged from that collar, like the necks of plaster cats which wag their heads, and are carried about upon the heads of scores of Russian foreigners. And something was always sticking to his uniform, — either a piece of hay or some trifle. Moreover, he had a peculiar knack, as he walked in the street, of arriving beneath a window when all sorts of rubbish was being flung out of it : hence he always bore about on his hat melon

and water-melon rinds, and other such stuff. Never once in his life did he give heed to what was going on every day in the street ; while it is well known that his young brother official, extending the range of his bold glance, gets so that he can see when any one's trouser-straps drop down upon the opposite sidewalk, which always calls forth a malicious smile upon his face. But Akakiy Akakievitch, if he looked at any thing, saw in all things the clean, even strokes of his written lines ; and only when a horse thrust his muzzle, from some unknown quarter, over his shoulder, and sent a whole gust of wind down his neck from his nostrils, did he observe that he was not in the middle of a line, but in the middle of the street.

On arriving at home, he sat down at once at the table, supped his cabbage-soup quickly, and ate a bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, ate it all with flies and any thing else which the Lord sent at the moment. On observing that his stomach began to puff out, he rose from the table, took out a little vial with ink, and copied papers which he had brought home. If there happened to be none,

he took copies for himself, for his own gratification, especially if the paper was noteworthy, not on account of its beautiful style, but of its being addressed to some new or distinguished person.

Even at the hour when the gray Petersburg sky had quite disappeared, and all the world of tchinovniks had eaten or dined, each as he could, in accordance with the salary he received, and his own fancy; when all were resting from the departmental jar of pens, running to and fro, their own and other people's indispensable occupations, and all the work that an uneasy man makes willingly for himself, rather than what is necessary; when tchinovniks hasten to dedicate to pleasure the time which is left to them—one bolder than the rest goes to the theatre; another, into the streets, devoting it to the inspection of some bonnets; one wastes his evening in compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small official circle; one—and this is the most common case of all—goes to his comrades on the fourth or third floor, to two small rooms with an ante-room or kitchen, and some pretensions to fashion, a lamp or some

other trifle which has cost many a sacrifice of dinner or excursion—in a word, even at the hour when all tchinovniks disperse among the contracted quarters of their friends, to play at whist, as they sip their tea from glasses with a kopek's worth of sugar, draw smoke through long pipes, relating at times some bits of gossip which a Russian man can never, under any circumstances, refrain from, or even when there is nothing to say, recounting everlasting anecdotes about the commandant whom they had sent to inform that the tails of the horses on the Falconet Monument had been cut off,—in a word, even when all strive to divert themselves, Akakiy Akakievitch yielded to no diversion. No one could ever say that he had seen him at any sort of an evening party. Having written to his heart's content, he lay down to sleep, smiling at the thought of the coming day,—of what God might send to copy on the morrow. Thus flowed on the peaceful life of the man, who, with a salary of four hundred rubles, understood how to be content with his fate; and thus it would have continued to flow on, perhaps, to extreme old age, were there not various

ills sown along the path of life for titular councillors as well as for private, actual, court, and every other species of councillor, even for those who never give any advice, or take any themselves.

There exists in Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive four hundred rubles salary a year, or thereabouts. This foe is no other than our Northern cold, although it is said to be very wholesome. At nine o'clock in the morning, at the very hour when the streets are filled with men bound for the departments, it begins to bestow such powerful and piercing nips on all noses impartially, that the poor officials really do not know what to do with them. At the hour when the foreheads of even those who occupy exalted positions ache with the cold, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councillors are sometimes unprotected. Their only salvation lies in traversing as quickly as possible, in their thin little cloaks, five or six streets, and then warming their feet well in the porter's room, and so thawing all their talents and qualifications for official service, which had become frozen on the way. Akakiy Akakie-

vitch had felt for some time that his back and shoulders suffered with peculiar poignancy, in spite of the fact that he tried to traverse the legal distance with all possible speed. He finally wondered whether the fault did not lie in his cloak. He examined it thoroughly at home, and discovered that in two places, namely, on the back and shoulders, it had become thin as mosquito-netting: the cloth was worn to such a degree that he could see through it, and the lining had fallen into pieces. You must know that Akakiy Akakievitch's cloak served as an object of ridicule to the tchinovniks: they even deprived it of the noble name of cloak, and called it a capote.¹ In fact, it was of singular make: its collar diminished year by year, but served to patch its other parts. The patching did not exhibit great skill on the part of the tailor, and turned out, in fact, baggy and ugly. Seeing how the matter stood, Akakiy Akakievitch decided that it would be necessary to take the cloak to Petrovitch, the tailor, who lived somewhere on the fourth floor up a dark staircase, and who, in spite of his having but one

¹ A woman's cloak.

eye, and pock-marks all over his face, busied himself with considerable success in repairing the trousers and coats of officials and others; that is to say, when he was sober, and not nursing some other scheme in his head. It is not necessary to say much about this tailor: but, as it is the custom to have the character of each personage in a novel clearly defined, there is nothing to be done; so here is Petrovitch the tailor. At first he was called only Grigoriy, and was some gentleman's serf: he began to call himself Petrovitch from the time when he received his free papers, and began to drink heavily on all holidays, at first on the great ones, and then on all church festivals without discrimination, wherever a cross stood in the calendar. On this point he was faithful to ancestral custom; and, quarrelling with his wife, he called her a low female and a German. As we have stumbled upon his wife, it will be necessary to say a word or two about her; but, unfortunately, little is known of her beyond the fact that Petrovitch has a wife, who wears a cap and a dress; but she cannot lay claim to beauty, it seems — at least, no one but the sol-

diers of the guard, as they pulled their mustaches, and uttered some peculiar sound, even looked under her cap when they met her.

Ascending the staircase which led to Petrovitch—which, to do it justice, was all soaked in water (dishwater), and penetrated with the smell of spirits which affects the eyes, and is an inevitable adjunct to all dark stairways in Petersburg houses—ascending the stairs, Akakiy Akakievitch pondered how much Petrovitch would ask, and mentally resolved not to give more than two rubles. The door was open; for the mistress, in cooking some fish, had raised such a smoke in the kitchen that not even the beetles were visible. Akakiy Akakievitch passed through the kitchen unperceived, even by the housewife, and at length reached a room where he beheld Petrovitch seated on a large, unpainted table, with his legs tucked under him like a Turkish pacha. His feet were bare, after the fashion of tailors as they sit at work; and the first thing which arrested the eye was his thumb, very well known to Akakiy Akakievitch, with a deformed nail thick and strong as a turtle's shell. On

Petrovitch's neck hung a skein of silk and thread, and upon his knees lay some old garment. He had been trying for three minutes to thread his needle, unsuccessfully, and so was very angry with the darkness, and even with the thread, growling in a low voice, "It won't go through, the barbarian! you pricked me, you rascal!" Akakiy Akakievitch was displeased at arriving at the precise moment when Petrovitch was angry: he liked to order something of Petrovitch when the latter was a little downhearted, or, as his wife expressed it, "when he had settled himself with brandy, the one-eyed devil!" Under such circumstances, Petrovitch generally came down in his price very readily, and came to an understanding, and even bowed and returned thanks. Afterwards, to be sure, his wife came, complaining that her husband was drunk, and so had set the price too low; but, if only a ten-kopek piece were added, then the matter was settled. But now it appeared that Petrovitch was in a sober condition, and therefore rough, taciturn, and inclined to demand, Satan only knows what price. Akakiy Akakievitch felt this, and would

gladly have beat a retreat, as the saying goes ; but he was in for it. Petrovitch screwed up his one eye very intently at him ; and Akakiy Akakievitch involuntarily said, "How do you do, Petrovitch !"

"I wish you a good-morning, sir," said Petrovitch, and squinted at Akakiy Akakievitch's hands, wishing to see what sort of booty he had brought.

"Ah ! I . . . to you, Petrovitch, this" — It must be known that Akakiy Akakievitch expressed himself chiefly by prepositions, adverbs, and by such scraps of phrases as had no meaning whatever. But if the matter was a very difficult one, then he had a habit of never completing his sentences ; so that quite frequently, having begun his phrase with the words, "This, in fact, is quite" . . . there was no more of it, and he forgot himself, thinking that he had already finished it.

"What is it ?" asked Petrovitch, and with his one eye scanned his whole uniform, beginning with the collar down to the cuffs, the back, the tails and button-holes, all of which were very well known to him, because they were his

own handiwork. Such is the habit of tailors : it is the first thing they do on meeting one.

“But I, here, this, Petrovitch, . . . a cloak, cloth . . . here you see, everywhere, in different places, it is quite strong . . . it is a little dusty, and looks old, but it is new, only here in one place it is a little . . . on the back, and here on one of the shoulders, it is a little worn, yes, here on this shoulder it is a little . . . do you see? this is all. And a little work ” . . .

Petrovitch took the mantle, spread it out, to begin with, on the table, looked long at it, shook his head, put out his hand to the window-sill after his snuff-box, adorned with the portrait of some general, — just what general is unknown, for the place where the face belonged had been rubbed through by the finger, and a square bit of paper had been pasted on. Having taken a pinch of snuff, Petrovitch spread the cloak out on his hands, and inspected it against the light, and again shook his head ; then he turned it, lining upwards, and shook his head once more ; again he removed the general-adorned cover with its bit of pasted paper, and, having stuffed his nose with snuff,

covered and put away the snuff-box, and said finally, "No, it is impossible to mend it: it's a miserable garment!"

Akakiy Akakievitch's heart sank at these words.

"Why is it impossible, Petrovitch?" he said, almost in the pleading voice of a child: "all that ails it is, that it is worn on the shoulders. You must have some pieces." . . .

"Yes, patches could be found, patches are easily found," said Petrovitch, "but there's nothing to sew them to. The thing is completely rotten: if you touch a needle to it — see, it will give way."

"Let it give way, and you can put on another patch at once."

"But there is nothing to put the patches on; there's no use in strengthening it; it is very far gone. It's lucky that it's cloth; for, if the wind were to blow, it would fly away."

"Well, strengthen it again. How this, in fact" . . .

"No," said Petrovitch decisively, "there is nothing to be done with it. It's a thoroughly bad job. You'd better, when the cold winter

weather comes on, make yourself some foot-bandages out of it, because stockings are not warm. The Germans invented them in order to make more money. [Petrovitch loved, on occasion, to give a fling at the Germans.] But it is plain that you must have a new cloak."

At the word *new*, all grew dark before Akakiy Akakievitch's eyes, and every thing in the room began to whirl round. The only thing he saw clearly was the general with the paper face on Petrovitch's snuff-box cover. "How a new one?" said he, as if still in a dream: "why, I have no money for that."

"Yes, a new one," said Petrovitch, with barbarous composure.

"Well, if it came to a new one, how, it" . . .

"You mean how much would it cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, you would have to lay out a hundred and fifty or more," said Petrovitch, and pursed up his lips significantly. He greatly liked powerful effects, liked to stun utterly and suddenly, and then to glance sideways to see what face the stunned person would put on the matter.

“A hundred and fifty rubles for a cloak!” shrieked poor Akakiy Akakievitch, — shrieked perhaps for the first time in his life, for his voice had always been distinguished for its softness.

“Yes, sir,” said Petrovitch, “for any sort of a cloak. If you have marten fur on the collar, or a silk-lined hood, it will mount up to two hundred.”

“Petrovitch, please,” said Akakiy Akakievitch in a beseeching tone, not hearing, and not trying to hear, Petrovitch’s words, and all his “effects,” “some repairs, in order that it may wear yet a little longer.”

“No, then, it would be a waste of labor and money,” said Petrovitch; and Akakiy Akakievitch went away after these words, utterly discouraged. But Petrovitch stood long after his departure, with significantly compressed lips, and not betaking himself to his work, satisfied that he would not be dropped, and an artistic tailor employed.

Akakiy Akakievitch went out into the street as if in a dream. “Such an affair!” he said to himself: “I did not think it had come to” . . .

and then after a pause, he added, "Well, so it is! see what it has come to at last! and I never imagined that it was so!" Then followed a long silence, after which he exclaimed, "Well, so it is! see what already exactly, nothing unexpected that . . . it would be nothing . . . what a circumstance!" So saying, instead of going home, he went in exactly the opposite direction without himself suspecting it. On the way, a chimney-sweep brought his dirty side up against him, and blackened his whole shoulder: a whole hatful of rubbish landed on him from the top of a house which was building. He observed it not; and afterwards, when he ran into a sentry, who, having planted his halberd beside him, was shaking some snuff from his box into his horny hand,—only then did he recover himself a little, and that because the sentry said, "Why are you thrusting yourself into a man's very face? Haven't you the sidewalk?" This caused him to look about him, and turn towards home. There only, he finally began to collect his thoughts, and to survey his position in its clear and actual light, and to argue with himself, not brokenly, but

sensibly and frankly, as with a reasonable friend, with whom one can discuss very private and personal matters. "No," said Akakiy Akakievitch, "it is impossible to reason with Petrovitch now: he is that . . . evidently, his wife has been beating him. I'd better go to him Sunday morning: after Saturday night he will be a little cross-eyed and sleepy, for he will have to get drunk, and his wife won't give him any money; and at such a time, a ten-kopek piece in his hand will — he will become more fit to reason with, and then the cloak, and that." . . . Thus argued Akakiy Akakievitch with himself, regained his courage, and waited until the first Sunday, when, seeing from afar that Petrovitch's wife had gone out of the house, he went straight to him. Petrovitch's eye was very much askew, in fact, after Saturday: his head drooped, and he was very sleepy; but for all that, as soon as he knew what the question was, it seemed as though Satan jogged his memory. "Impossible," said he: "please to order a new one." Thereupon Akakiy Akakievitch handed over the ten-kopek piece. "Thank you, sir; I will drink your good health," said Petrovitch: "but as for

the cloak, don't trouble yourself about it; it is good for nothing. I will make you a new coat famously, so let us settle about it now."

Akakiy Akakievitch was still for mending it; but Petrovitch would not hear to it, and said, "I shall certainly make you a new one, and please depend upon it that I shall do my best. It may even be, as the fashion goes, that the collar can be fastened by silver hooks under a flap."

Then Akakiy Akakievitch saw that it was impossible to get along without a new cloak, and his spirit sank utterly. How, in fact, was it to be accomplished? Where was the money to come from? He might, to be sure, depend, in part, upon his present at Christmas; but that money had long been doled out and allotted beforehand. He must have some new trousers, and pay a debt of long standing to the shoemaker for putting new tops to his old boots, and he must order three shirts from the seamstress, and a couple of pieces of linen which it is impolite to mention in print;—in a word, all his money must be spent; and even if the director should be so kind as to order forty-five rubles instead of forty, or even fifty, it would be

a mere nothing, and a mere drop in the ocean towards the capital necessary for a cloak: although he knew that Petrovitch was wrong-headed enough to blurt out some outrageous price, Satan only knows what, so that his own wife could not refrain from exclaiming, "Have you lost your senses, you fool?" At one time he would not work at any price, and now it was quite likely that he had asked a price which it was not worth. Although he knew that Petrovitch would undertake to make it for eighty rubles, still, where was he to get the eighty rubles? He might possibly manage half; yes, a half of that might be procured: but where was the other half to come from? But the reader must first be told where the first half came from. Akakiy Akakievitch had a habit of putting, for every ruble he spent, a groschen into a small box, fastened with lock and key, and with a hole in the top for the reception of money. At the end of each half-year, he counted over the heap of coppers, and changed it into small silver coins. This he continued for a long time; and thus, in the course of some years, the sum proved to amount to over forty

rubles. Thus he had one half on hand ; but where to get the other half ? where to get another forty rubles ? Akakiy Akakievitch thought and thought, and decided that it would be necessary to curtail his ordinary expenses, for the space of one year at least, — to dispense with tea in the evening ; to burn no candles, and, if there was any thing which he must do, to go into his landlady's room, and work by her light ; when he went into the street, he must walk as lightly as possible, and as cautiously, upon the stones and flagging, almost upon tip-toe, in order not to wear out his heels in too short a time ; he must give the laundress as little to wash as possible ; and, in order not to wear out his clothes, he must take them off as soon as he got home, and wear only his cotton dressing-gown, which had been long and carefully saved.

To tell the truth, it was a little hard for him at first to accustom himself to these deprivations ; but he got used to them at length, after a fashion, and all went smoothly — he even got used to being hungry in the evening ; but he made up for it by treating himself in spirit,

bearing ever in mind the thought of his future cloak. From that time forth, his existence seemed to become, in some way, fuller, as if he were married, as if some other man lived in him, as if he were not alone, and some charming friend had consented to go along life's path with him, — and the friend was no other than that cloak, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out. He became more lively, and his character even became firmer, like that of a man who has made up his mind, and set himself a goal. From his face and gait, doubt and indecision — in short, all hesitating and wavering traits — disappeared of themselves. Fire gleamed in his eyes: occasionally, the boldest and most daring ideas flitted through his mind; why not, in fact, have marten fur on the collar? The thought of this nearly made him absent-minded. Once, in copying a letter, he nearly made a mistake, so that he exclaimed almost aloud, “Ugh!” and crossed himself. Once in the course of each month, he had a conference with Petrovitch on the subject of the coat, — where it would be better to buy the cloth, and the color, and the price, — and he

always returned home satisfied, though troubled, reflecting that the time would come at last when it could all be bought, and then the cloak could be made. The matter progressed more briskly than he had expected. Far beyond all his hopes, the director appointed neither forty nor forty-five rubles for Akakiy Akakievitch's share, but sixty. Did he suspect that Akakiy Akakievitch needed a cloak? or did it merely happen so? at all events, twenty extra rubles were by this means provided. This circumstance hastened matters. Only two or three months more of hunger — and Akakiy Akakievitch had accumulated about eighty rubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to beat. On the first possible day, he visited the shops in company with Petrovitch. They purchased some very good cloth — and reasonably, for they had been considering the matter for six months, and rarely did a month pass without their visiting the shops to inquire prices; and Petrovitch said himself, that no better cloth could be had. For lining, they selected a cotton stuff, but so firm and thick, that Petrovitch declared it to be better than silk, and even prettier and more

glossy. They did not buy the marten fur, because it was dear, in fact; but in its stead, they picked out the very best of cat-skin which could be found in the shop, and which might be taken for marten at a distance.

Petrovitch worked at the cloak two whole weeks, for there was a great deal of quilting: otherwise it would have been done sooner. Petrovitch charged twelve rubles for his work, — it could not possibly be done for less: it was all sewed with silk, in small, double seams; and Petrovitch went over each seam afterwards with his own teeth, stamping in various patterns. It was — it is difficult to say precisely on what day, but it was probably the most glorious day in Akakiy Akakievitch's life, when Petrovitch at length brought home the cloak. He brought it in the morning, before the hour when it was necessary to go to the department. Never did a cloak arrive so exactly in the nick of time; for the severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten increase. Petrovitch presented himself with the coat as befits a good tailor. On his countenance was a significant expression, such as Akakiy Akakievitch had

never beheld there. He seemed sensible to the fullest extent that he had done no small deed, and that a gulf had suddenly appeared, separating tailors who only put in linings, and make repairs, from those who make new things. He took the cloak out of the pocket-handkerchief in which he had brought it. (The handkerchief was fresh from the laundress : he now removed it, and put it in his pocket for use.) Taking out the cloak, he gazed proudly at it, held it with both hands, and flung it very skilfully over the shoulders of Akakiy Akakievitch ; then he pulled it and fitted it down behind with his hand ; then he draped it around Akakiy Akakievitch without buttoning it. Akakiy Akakievitch, as a man advanced in life, wished to try the sleeves. Petrovitch helped him on with them, and it turned out that the sleeves were satisfactory also. In short, the cloak appeared to be perfect, and just in season. Petrovitch did not neglect this opportunity to observe that it was only because he lived in a narrow street, and had no signboard, and because he had known Akakiy Akakievitch so long, that he had made it so cheaply ; but, if he

had been on the Nevsky Prospect, he would have charged seventy-five rubles for the making alone. Akakiy Akakievitch did not care to argue this point with Petrovitch, and he was afraid of the large sums with which Petrovitch was fond of raising the dust. He paid him, thanked him, and set out at once in his new cloak for the department. Petrovitch followed him, and, pausing in the street, gazed long at the cloak in the distance, and went to one side expressly to run through a crooked alley, and emerge again into the street to gaze once more upon the cloak from another point, namely, directly in front.

Meantime Akakiy Akakievitch went on with every sense in holiday mood. He was conscious every second of the time, that he had a new cloak on his shoulders; and several times he laughed with internal satisfaction. In fact, there were two advantages,—one was its warmth; the other, its beauty. He saw nothing of the road, and suddenly found himself at the department. He threw off his cloak in the ante-room, looked it over well, and confided it to the especial care of the janitor. It is impos-

sible to say just how every one in the department knew at once that Akakiy Akakievitch had a new cloak, and that the "mantle" no longer existed. All rushed at the same moment into the ante-room, to inspect Akakiy Akakievitch's new cloak. They began to congratulate him, and to say pleasant things to him, so that he began at first to smile, and then he grew ashamed. When all surrounded him, and began to say that the new cloak must be "christened," and that he must give a whole evening at least to it, Akakiy Akakievitch lost his head completely, knew not where he stood, what to answer, and how to get out of it. He stood blushing all over for several minutes, and was on the point of assuring them with great simplicity that it was not a new cloak, that it was so and so, that it was the old cloak. At length one of the tchinovniks, some assistant chief probably, in order to show that he was not at all proud, and on good terms with his inferiors, said, "So be it: I will give the party instead of Akakiy Akakievitch; I invite you all to tea with me to-night; it happens quite *apropos*, as it is my name-day." The officials

naturally at once offered the assistant chief their congratulations, and accepted the invitation with pleasure. Akakiy Akakievitch would have declined ; but all declared that it was discourteous, that it was simply a sin and a shame, and that he could not possibly refuse. Besides, the idea became pleasant to him when he recollected that he should thereby have a chance to wear his new cloak in the evening also. That whole day was truly a most triumphant festival day for Akakiy Akakievitch. He returned home in the most happy frame of mind, threw off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, admiring afresh the cloth and the lining ; and then he brought out his old, worn-out cloak, for comparison. He looked at it, and laughed, so vast was the difference. And long after dinner he laughed again when the condition of the mantle recurred to his mind. He dined gayly, and after dinner wrote nothing, no papers even, but took his ease for a while on the bed, until it got dark. Then he dressed himself leisurely, put on his cloak, and stepped out into the street. Where the host lived, unfortunately we cannot say : our memory begins to

fail us badly ; and every thing in St. Petersburg, all the houses and streets, have run together, and become so mixed up in our head, that it is very difficult to produce any thing thence in proper form. At all events, this much is certain, that the tchinovnik lived in the best part of the city ; and therefore it must have been any thing but near to Akakiy Akakievitch. Akakiy Akakievitch was first obliged to traverse a sort of wilderness of deserted, dimly lighted streets ; but in proportion as he approached the tchinovnik's quarter of the city, the streets became more lively, more populous, and more brilliantly illuminated. Pedestrians began to appear ; handsomely dressed ladies were more frequently encountered ; the men had otter collars ; peasant wagoners, with their grate-like sledges stuck full of gilt nails, became rarer ; on the other hand, more and more coachmen in red velvet caps, with lacquered sleighs and bear-skin robes, began to appear ; carriages with decorated coach-boxes flew swiftly through the streets, their wheels scrunching the snow. Akakiy Akakievitch gazed upon all this as upon a novelty.

He had not been in the streets during the evening for years. He halted out of curiosity before the lighted window of a shop, to look at a picture representing a handsome woman, who had thrown off her shoe, thereby baring her whole foot in a very pretty way; and behind her the head of a man with side-whiskers and a handsome mustache peeped from the door of another room. Akakiy Akakievitch shook his head, and laughed, and then went on his way. Why did he laugh? Because he had met with a thing utterly unknown, but for which every one cherishes, nevertheless, some sort of feeling; or else he thought, like many officials, as follows: "Well, those French! What is to be said? If they like any thing of that sort, then, in fact, that" . . . But possibly he did not think that.

For it is impossible to enter a man's mind, and know all that he thinks. At length he reached the house in which the assistant chief lodged. The assistant chief lived in fine style: on the staircase burned a lantern; his apartment was on the second floor. On entering the vestibule, Akakiy Akakievitch beheld a whole row

of overshoes on the floor. Amid them, in the centre of the room, stood a samovar, humming, and emitting clouds of steam. On the walls hung all sorts of coats and cloaks, among which there were even some with beaver collars or velvet facings. Beyond the wall the buzz of conversation was audible, which became clear and loud when the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, cream-jugs, and sugar-bowls. It was evident that the tchinovniks had arrived long before, and had already finished their first glass of tea. Akakiy Akakievitch, having hung up his own cloak, entered the room; and before him all at once appeared lights, officials, pipes, card-tables; and he was surprised by a sound of rapid conversation rising from all the tables, and the noise of moving chairs. He halted very awkwardly in the middle of the room, wondering, and trying to decide, what he ought to do. But they had seen him: they received him with a shout, and all went out at once into the ante-room, and took another look at his cloak. Akakiy Akakievitch, although somewhat confused, was open-hearted, and could not refrain from rejoicing when he saw

how they praised his cloak. Then, of course, they all dropped him and his cloak, and returned, as was proper, to the tables set out for whist. All this — the noise, talk, and throng of people — was rather wonderful to Akakiy Akakievitch. He simply did not know where he stood, or where to put his hands, his feet, and his whole body. Finally he sat down by the players, looked at the cards, gazed at the face of one and another, and after a while began to gape, and to feel that it was wearisome — the more so, as the hour was already long past when he usually went to bed. He wanted to take leave of the host; but they would not let him go, saying that he must drink a glass of champagne, in honor of his new garment, without fail. In the course of an hour, supper was served, consisting of vegetable salad, cold veal, pastry, confectioner's pies, and champagne. They made Akakiy Akakievitch drink two glasses of champagne, after which he felt that the room grew livelier: still, he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock, and that he should have been at home long ago. In order that the host might not think of some excuse for detaining him, he

went out of the room quietly, sought out, in the ante-room, his cloak, which, to his sorrow, he found lying on the floor, brushed it, picked off every speck, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs to the street. In the street all was still bright. Some petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of people, were open : others were shut, but, nevertheless, showed a streak of light the whole length of the door-crack, indicating that they were not yet free of company, and that probably domestics, both male and female, were finishing their stories and conversations, leaving their masters in complete ignorance as to their whereabouts. Akakiy Akakievitch went on in a happy frame of mind : he even started to run, without knowing why, after some lady, who flew past like a flash of lightning, and whose whole body was endowed with an extraordinary amount of movement. But he stopped short, and went on very quietly as before, wondering whence he had got that gait. Soon there spread before him those deserted streets, which are not cheerful in the daytime, not to mention the evening. Now they were even more dim and lonely : the lan-

terns began to grow rarer — oil, evidently, had been less liberally supplied ; then came wooden houses and fences : not a soul anywhere ; only the snow sparkled in the streets, and mournfully darkled the low-roofed cabins with their closed shutters. He approached the place where the street crossed an endless square with barely visible houses on its farther side, and which seemed a fearful desert.

Afar, God knows where, a tiny spark glimmered from some sentry-box, which seemed to stand on the edge of the world. Akakiy Akakievitch's cheerfulness diminished at this point in a marked degree. He entered the square, not without an involuntary sensation of fear, as though his heart warned him of some evil. He glanced back and on both sides — it was like a sea about him. "No, it is better not to look," he thought, and went on, closing his eyes ; and when he opened them, to see whether he was near the end of the square, he suddenly beheld, standing just before his very nose, some bearded individuals — of just what sort, he could not make out. All grew dark before his eyes, and his breast throbbed.

“But of course the cloak is mine!” said one of them in a loud voice, seizing hold of the collar. Akakiy Akakievitch was about to shout *watch*, when the second man thrust a fist into his mouth, about the size of a tchinovnik’s head, muttering, “Now scream!”

Akakiy Akakievitch felt them take off his cloak, and give him a push with a knee: he fell headlong upon the snow, and felt no more. In a few minutes he recovered consciousness, and rose to his feet; but no one was there. He felt that it was cold in the square, and that his cloak was gone: he began to shout, but his voice did not appear to reach to the outskirts of the square. In despair, but without ceasing to shout, he started on a run through the square, straight towards the sentry-box, beside which stood the watchman, leaning on his halberd, and apparently curious to know what Devil of a man was running towards him from afar, and shouting. Akakiy Akakievitch ran up to him, and began in a sobbing voice to shout that he was asleep, and attended to nothing, and did not see when a man was robbed. The watchman replied that he had seen no one; that he had seen two men

stop him in the middle of the square, and supposed that they were friends of his; and that, instead of scolding in vain, he had better go to the captain on the morrow, so that the captain might investigate as to who had stolen the cloak. Akakiy Akakievitch ran home in complete disorder: his hair, which grew very thinly upon his temples and the back of his head, was entirely disarranged; his side and breast, and all his trousers, were covered with snow. The old woman, mistress of his lodgings, hearing a terrible knocking, sprang hastily from her bed, and, with a shoe on one foot only, ran to open the door, pressing the sleeve of her chemise to her bosom out of modesty; but when she had opened it, she fell back on beholding Akakiy Akakievitch in such a state. When he told the matter, she clasped her hands, and said that he must go straight to the superintendent, for the captain would turn up his nose, promise well, and drop the matter there: the very best thing to do, would be to go to the superintendent; that he knew her, because Finnish Anna, her former cook, was now nurse at the superintendent's; that she often saw him passing the

house ; and that he was at church every Sunday, praying, but at the same time gazing cheerfully at everybody ; and that he must be a good man, judging from all appearances. Having listened to this opinion, Akakiy Akakievitch betook himself sadly to his chamber ; and how he spent the night there, any one can imagine who can put himself in another's place. Early in the morning, he presented himself at the superintendent's ; but they told him that he was asleep : he went again at ten — and was again informed that he was asleep : he went at eleven o'clock ; and they said, "The superintendent is not at home : " at dinner-time, and the clerks in the ante-room would not admit him on any terms, and insisted upon knowing his business, and what brought him, and how it had come about : so that at last, for once in his life, Akakiy Akakievitch felt an inclination to show some spirit, and said curtly that he must see the superintendent in person ; that they should not presume to refuse him entrance ; that he came from the department of justice, and, when he complained of them, they would see. The clerks dared make no reply to this, and one

of them went to call the superintendent. The superintendent listened to the extremely strange story of the theft of the coat. Instead of directing his attention to the principal points of the matter, he began to question Akakiy Akakievitch, Why did he return so late? Was he in the habit of going, or had he been, to any disorderly house? so that Akakiy Akakievitch got thoroughly confused, and left him without knowing whether the affair of his cloak was in proper train, or not. All that day he never went near the court (for the first time in his life). The next day he made his appearance, very pale, and in his old mantle, which had become even more shabby. The news of the robbery of the cloak touched many; although there were officials present, who never omitted an opportunity, even the present, to ridicule Akakiy Akakievitch. They decided to take up a collection for him on the spot, but it turned out a mere trifle; for the tchinovniks had already spent a great deal in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for some book, at the suggestion of the head of that division, who was a friend of the author: and so the sum was trifling. One, moved by

pity, resolved to help Akakiy Akakievitch with some good advice at least, and told him that he ought not to go to the captain, for although it might happen that the police-captain, wishing to win the approval of his superior officers, might hunt up the cloak by some means, still, the cloak would remain in the possession of the police if he did not offer legal proof that it belonged to him : the best thing for him would be to apply to a certain *prominent personage* ; that this *prominent personage*, by entering into relations with the proper persons, could greatly expedite the matter. As there was nothing else to be done, Akakiy Akakievitch decided to go to the prominent personage. What was the official position of the *prominent personage*, remains unknown to this day. The reader must know that *the prominent personage* had but recently become a prominent personage, but up to that time he had been an insignificant person. Moreover, his present position was not considered prominent in comparison with others more prominent. But there is always a circle of people to whom what is insignificant in the eyes of others, is always important enough. Moreover,

he strove to increase his importance by many devices ; namely, he managed to have the inferior officials meet him on the staircase when he entered upon his service : no one was to presume to come directly to him, but the strictest etiquette must be observed ; “ The Collegiate Recorder ” must announce to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councillor, or whatever other man was proper, and the business came before him in this manner. In holy Russia, all is thus contaminated with the love of imitation : each man imitates and copies his superior. They even say that a certain titular councillor, when promoted to the head of some little separate courtroom, immediately partitioned off a private room for himself, called it the *Audience Chamber*, and posted at the door a lackey with red collar and braid, who grasped the handle of the door, and opened to all comers ; though the audience chamber would hardly hold an ordinary writing-table.

The manners and customs of the *prominent personage* were grand and imposing, but rather exaggerated. The main foundation of his sys-

tem was strictness. "Strictness, strictness, and always strictness!" he generally said; and at the last word he looked significantly into the face of the person to whom he spoke. But there was no necessity for this, for the half-score of tchinovniks who formed the entire force of the mechanism of the office were properly afraid without it: on catching sight of him afar off, they left their work, and waited, drawn up in line, until their chief had passed through the room. His ordinary converse with his inferiors smacked of sternness, and consisted chiefly of three phrases: "How dare you?" "Do you know to whom you are talking?" "Do you realize who stands before you?" Otherwise he was a very kind-hearted man, good to his comrades, and ready to oblige; but the rank of general threw him completely off his balance. On receiving that rank, he became confused, as it were, lost his way, and never knew what to do. If he chanced to be with his equals, he was still a very nice kind of man, — a very good fellow in many respects, and not stupid: but just the moment that he happened to be in the society of people but

one rank lower than himself, he was simply incomprehensible ; he became silent ; and his situation aroused sympathy, the more so, as he felt himself that he might have made an incomparably better use of the time. In his eyes, there was sometimes visible a desire to join some interesting conversation and circle ; but he was held back by the thought, Would it not be a very great condescension on his part ? Would it not be familiar ? and would he not thereby lose his importance ? And in consequence of such reflections, he remained ever in the same dumb state, uttering only occasionally a few monosyllabic sounds, and thereby earning the name of the most tiresome of men. To this *prominent personage*, our Akakiy Akakievitch presented himself, and that at the most unfavorable time, very inopportune for himself, though opportune for the *prominent personage*. The prominent personage was in his cabinet, conversing very, very gayly with a recently arrived old acquaintance and companion of his childhood, whom he had not seen for several years. At such a time it was announced to him that a person named Bashmatchkin had

come. He asked abruptly, "Who is he?" — "Some tchinovnik," they told him. "Ah, he can wait! this is no time," said the important man. It must be remarked here, that the important man lied outrageously: he had said all he had to say to his friend long before; and the conversation had been interspersed for some time with very long pauses, during which they merely slapped each other on the leg, and said, "You think so, Ivan Abramovitch!" "Just so, Stepan Varlamovitch!" Nevertheless, he ordered that the tchinovnik should wait, in order to show his friend — a man who had not been in the service for a long time, but had lived at home in the country — how long tchinovniks had to wait in his ante-room.

At length, having talked himself completely out, and more than that, having had his fill of pauses, and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable arm-chair with reclining back, he suddenly seemed to recollect, and told the secretary, who stood by the door with papers of reports, "Yes, it seems, indeed, that there is a tchinovnik standing there. Tell him that he may come in." On perceiving Akakiy Akakie-

vitch's modest mien, and his worn undress uniform, he turned abruptly to him, and said, "What do you want?" in a curt, hard voice, which he had practised in his room in private, and before the looking-glass, for a whole week before receiving his present rank. Akakiy Akakievitch, who already felt betimes the proper amount of fear, became somewhat confused: and as well as he could, as well as his tongue would permit, he explained, with a rather more frequent addition than usual of the word *that*, that his cloak was quite new, and had been stolen in the most inhuman manner; that he had applied to him, in order that he might, in some way, by his intermediation, that . . . he might enter into correspondence with the chief superintendent of police, and find the cloak. For some inexplicable reason, this conduct seemed familiar to the general. "What, my dear sir!" he said abruptly, "don't you know etiquette? Where have you come to? Don't you know how matters are managed? You should first have entered a complaint about this at the court: it would have gone to the head of the department, to the chief of the

division, then it would have been handed over to the secretary, and the secretary would have given it to me." . . .

"But, your excellency," said Akakiy Akakievitch, trying to collect his small handful of wits, and conscious at the same time that he was perspiring terribly, "I, your excellency, presumed to trouble you because secretaries that . . . are an untrustworthy race." . . .

"What, what, what!" said the important personage. "Where did you get such courage? Where did you get such ideas? What impudence towards their chiefs and superiors has spread among the young generation!" The prominent personage apparently had not observed that Akakiy Akakievitch was already in the neighborhood of fifty. If he could be called a young man, then it must have been in comparison with some one who was seventy. "Do you know to whom you speak? Do you realize who stands before you? Do you realize it? do you realize it? I ask you!" Then he stamped his foot, and raised his voice to such a pitch that it would have frightened even a different man from Akakiy Akakievitch. Aka-

kiy Akakievitch's senses failed him ; he staggered, trembled in every limb, and could not stand ; if the porters had not run in to support him, he would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out insensible. But the prominent personage, gratified that the effect should have surpassed his expectations, and quite intoxicated with the thought that his word could even deprive a man of his senses, glanced sideways at his friend in order to see how he looked upon this, and perceived, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most undecided frame of mind, and even beginning, on his side, to feel a trifle frightened.

Akakiy Akakievitch could not remember how he descended the stairs, and stepped into the street. He felt neither his hands nor feet. Never in his life had he been so rated by any general, let alone a strange one. He went on through the snow-storm, which was howling through the streets, with his mouth wide open, slipping off the sidewalk : the wind, in Petersburg fashion, flew upon him from all quarters, and through every cross-street. In a twinkling it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and he

reached home unable to utter a word : his throat was all swollen, and he lay down on his bed. So powerful is sometimes a good scolding ! The next day a violent fever made its appearance. Thanks to the generous assistance of the Petersburg climate, his malady progressed more rapidly than could have been expected : and when the doctor arrived, he found, on feeling his pulse, that there was nothing to be done, except to prescribe a fomentation, merely that the sick man might not be left without the beneficent aid of medicine ; but at the same time, he predicted his end in another thirty-six hours. After this, he turned to the landlady, and said, “ And as for you, my dear, don’t waste your time on him : order his pine coffin now, for an oak one will be too expensive for him.” Did Akakiy Akakievitch hear these fatal words ? and, if he heard them, did they produce any overwhelming effect upon him ? Did he lament the bitterness of his life ? — We know not, for he continued in a raving, parching condition. Visions incessantly appeared to him, each stranger than the other : now he saw Petrovitch, and ordered him to make a cloak, with some traps

for robbers, who seemed to him to be always under the bed; and he cried, every moment, to the landlady to pull one robber from under his coverlet: then he inquired why his old mantle hung before him when he had a new cloak; then he fancied that he was standing before the general, listening to a thorough setting-down, and saying, "Forgive, your excellency!" but at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard any thing of the kind from him — the more so, as those words followed directly after the words *your excellency*. Later he talked utter nonsense, of which nothing could be understood: all that was evident, was that his incoherent words and thoughts hovered ever about one thing, — his cloak.

At last poor Akakiy Akakievitch breathed his last. They sealed up neither his room nor his effects, because, in the first place, there were no heirs, and, in the second, there was very little inheritance; namely, a bunch of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons which had burst

off his trousers, and the mantle already known to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows. I confess that the person who told this tale took no interest in the matter. They carried Akakiy Akakievitch out, and buried him. And Petersburg was left without Akakiy Akakievitch, as though he had never lived there. A being disappeared, and was hidden, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, who never even attracted to himself the attention of an observer of nature, who omits no opportunity of thrusting a pin through a common fly, and examining it under the microscope, — a being who bore meekly the jibes of the department, and went to his grave without having done one unusual deed, but to whom, nevertheless, at the close of his life, appeared a bright visitant in the form of a cloak, which momentarily cheered his poor life, and upon whom, thereafter, an intolerable misfortune descended, just as it descends upon the heads of the mighty of this world! . . . Several days after his death, the porter was sent from the department to his lodgings, with an order for him to present himself immediately; the chief commands it: but

the porter had to return unsuccessful, with the answer that he could not come; and to the question, Why? he explained in the words, "Well, because: he is already dead! he was buried four days ago." In this manner did they hear of Akakiy Akakievitch's death at the department; and the next day a new and much larger tchinovnik sat in his place, forming his letters by no means upright, but more inclined and slantwise.

But who could have imagined that this was not the end of Akakiy Akakievitch, — that he was destined to raise a commotion after death, as if in compensation for his utterly insignificant life? But so it happened, and our poor story unexpectedly gains a fantastic ending.

A rumor suddenly spread throughout Petersburg, that a dead man had taken to appearing on the Kalinkin Bridge, and far beyond, at night, in the form of a tchinovnik seeking a stolen cloak, and that, under the pretext of its being the stolen cloak, he dragged every one's cloak from his shoulders without regard to rank or calling, — cat-skin, beaver, wadded, fox, bear, raccoon coats; in a word, every sort of fur and

skin which men adopted for their covering. One of the department employés saw the dead man with his own eyes, and immediately recognized in him Akakiy Akakievitch : nevertheless, this inspired him with such terror, that he started to run with all his might, and therefore could not examine thoroughly, and only saw how the latter threatened him from afar with his finger. Constant complaints poured in from all quarters, that the backs and shoulders, not only of titular but even of court councillors, were entirely exposed to the danger of a cold, on account of the frequent dragging off of their cloaks. Arrangements were made by the police to catch the corpse, at any cost, alive or dead, and punish him as an example to others, in the most severe manner : and in this they nearly succeeded ; for a policeman, on guard in Kirushkin Alley, caught the corpse by the collar on the very scene of his evil deeds, for attempting to pull off the frieze cloak of some retired musician who had blown the flute in his day. Having seized him by the collar, he summoned, with a shout, two of his comrades, whom he enjoined to hold him fast, while he himself

felt for a moment in his boot, in order to draw thence his snuff-box, to refresh his six times forever frozen nose; but the snuff was of a sort which even a corpse could not endure. The policeman had no sooner succeeded, having closed his right nostril with his finger, in holding half a handful up to the left, than the corpse sneezed so violently that he completely filled the eyes of all three. While they raised their fists to wipe them, the dead man vanished utterly, so that they positively did not know whether they had actually had him in their hands at all. Thereafter the watchmen conceived such a terror of dead men, that they were afraid even to seize the living, and only screamed from a distance, "Hey, there! go your way!" and the dead tchinovnik began to appear, even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, causing no little terror to all timid people.

But we have totally neglected that *certain prominent personage*, who may really be considered as the cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, justice compels us to say, that after the departure of poor, thoroughly annihilated Akakiy Akakievitch, he

felt something like remorse. Suffering was unpleasant to him : his heart was accessible to many good impulses, in spite of the fact that his rank very often prevented his showing his true self. As soon as his friend had left his cabinet, he began to think about poor Akakiy Akakievitch. And from that day forth, poor Akakiy Akakievitch, who could not bear up under an official reprimand, recurred to his mind almost every day. The thought of the latter troubled him to such an extent, that a week later he even resolved to send an official to him, to learn whether he really could assist him ; and when it was reported to him that Akakiy Akakievitch had died suddenly of fever, he was startled, listened to the reproaches of his conscience, and was out of sorts for the whole day. Wishing to divert his mind in some way, and forget the disagreeable impression, he set out that evening for one of his friends' houses, where he found quite a large party assembled ; and, what was better, nearly every one was of the same rank, so that he need not feel in the least constrained. This had a marvellous effect upon his mental state.

He expanded, made himself agreeable in conversation, charming: in short, he passed a delightful evening. After supper he drank a couple of glasses of champagne—not a bad recipe for cheerfulness, as every one knows. The champagne inclined him to various out-of-the-way adventures; and, in particular, he determined not to go home, but to go to see a certain well-known lady, Karolina Ivanovna, a lady, it appears, of German extraction, with whom he felt on a very friendly footing. It must be mentioned that the prominent personage was no longer a young man, but a good husband, and respected father of a family. Two sons, one of whom was already in the service; and a good-looking, sixteen-year-old daughter, with a rather *retroussé* but pretty little nose,—came every morning to kiss his hand, and say, “*Bon jour, papa.*” His wife, a still fresh and good-looking woman, first gave him her hand to kiss, and then, reversing the procedure, kissed his. But the prominent personage, though perfectly satisfied in his domestic relations, considered it stylish to have a friend in another quarter of the city. This friend was

hardly prettier or younger than his wife ; but there are such puzzles in the world, and it is not our place to judge them. So the important personage descended the stairs, stepped into his sleigh, and said to the coachman, "To Karolina Ivanovna's," and, wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, found himself in that delightful position than which a Russian can conceive nothing better, which is, when you think of nothing yourself, yet the thoughts creep into your mind of their own accord, each more agreeable than the other, giving you no trouble to drive them away, or seek them. Fully satisfied, he slightly recalled all the gay points of the evening just passed, and all the *mots* which had made the small circle laugh : many of them he repeated in a low voice, and found them quite as funny as before ; and therefore it is not surprising that he should laugh heartily at them. Occasionally, however, he was hindered by gusts of wind, which, coming suddenly, God knows whence or why, cut his face, flinging in it lumps of snow, filling out his cloak-collar like a sail, or suddenly blowing it over his head with supernatural

force, and thus causing him constant trouble to disentangle himself. Suddenly the important personage felt some one clutch him very firmly by the collar. Turning round, he perceived a man of short stature, in an old, worn uniform, and recognized, not without terror, Akakiy Akakievitch. The tchinovnik's face was white as snow, and looked just like a corpse's. But the horror of the important personage transcended all bounds when he saw the dead man's mouth open, and, with a terrible odor of the grave, utter the following remarks: "Ah, here you are at last! I have you, that . . . by the collar! I need your cloak: you took no trouble about mine, but reprimanded me; now give up your own." The pallid prominent personage almost died. Brave as he was in the office and in the presence of inferiors generally, and although, at the sight of his manly form and appearance, every one said, "Ugh! how much character he has!" yet at this crisis, he, like many possessed of an heroic exterior, experienced such terror, that, not without cause, he began to fear an attack of illness. He flung his cloak hastily from his shoulders, and

shouted to his coachman in an unnatural voice, "Home, at full speed!" The coachman, hearing the tone which is generally employed at critical moments, and even accompanied by something much more tangible, drew his head down between his shoulders in case of an emergency, flourished his knout, and flew on like an arrow. In a little more than six minutes the prominent personage was at the entrance of his own house. Pale, thoroughly scared, and cloakless, he went home instead of to Karolina Ivanovna's, got to his chamber after some fashion, and passed the night in the direst distress; so that the next morning over their tea, his daughter said plainly, "You are very pale to-day, papa." But papa remained silent, and said not a word to any one of what had happened to him, where he had been, or where he had intended to go. This occurrence made a deep impression upon him. He even began to say less frequently to the under-officials, "How dare you? do you realize who stands before you?" and, if he did utter the words, it was after first having learned the bearings of the matter. But the most noteworthy point

was, that from that day the apparition of the dead tchinovnik quite ceased to be seen ; evidently the general's cloak just fitted his shoulders ; at all events, no more instances of his dragging cloaks from people's shoulders were heard of. But many active and apprehensive persons could by no means re-assure themselves, and asserted that the dead tchinovnik still showed himself in distant parts of the city. And, in fact, one watchman in Kolomna saw with his own eyes the apparition come from behind a house ; but being rather weak of body, — so much so, that once upon a time an ordinary full-grown pig running out of a private house knocked him off his legs, to the great amusement of the surrounding izvoshtchiks,¹ from whom he demanded a groschen apiece for snuff, as damages, — being weak, he dared not arrest him, but followed him in the dark, until, at length, the apparition looked round, paused, and inquired, “What do you want?” and showed such a fist as you never see on living men. The watchman said, “It's of no consequence,” and turned back instantly. But the

¹ Coachmen (public).

apparition was much too tall, wore huge mustaches, and, directing its steps apparently towards the Obukhoff Bridge, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

TABLE OF RUSSIAN RANKS.

TABLE OF RUSSIAN RANKS. (*Tchins.*)

	CIVIL RANKS.	CORRESPONDING RANKS.		
		Army.	Navy.	Court.
1	Chancellor of the Empire.	General Field-marshal.	Admiral-in-Chief.	. . . . .
2	Actual Privy Councillor.	General of Infantry. General of Cavalry. General of Artillery.	. . . . . Admiral.	Chief Chamberlain. Chief Steward of the Household. Chief Marshal of the Court. Chief Cupbearer.
3	Privy Councillor.	Lieutenant-General.	Vice-Admiral.	Steward, Marshal, Master of the Hounds.
4	Actual Councillor of State.	Major-General.	Rear-Admiral.	. . . . .
5	Councillor of State.	. . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .
6	Collegiate Councillor.	Colonel. <i>Staff</i>	<i>Officers.</i> Captain of the 1st Rank.	Chamber-Fourrier.
7	Court Councillor.	Lieutenant-Colonel.	Captain of the 2d Rank.	. . . . .
8	Collegiate Assessor.	Major.	Captain-Lieutenant.	. . . . .
9	Titular Councillor.	Captain of Infantry. <i>Upper</i> Captain of Cavalry.	<i>Officers.</i> Lieutenant.	Court-Fourrier. ¹
10	Collegiate Councillor.	Staff-Captain. Staff-Cavalry Captain.	. . . . .	. . . . .
11	Naval Secretary.	. . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .
12	Governmental Secretary.	Lieutenant.	Midshipman.	Table-Decker, Coffee - Bearer, Butter-Bearer.
13	Senate, Synod, and Cabinet Registrar.	Sub-Lieutenant.	. . . . .	. . . . .
14	Collegiate Registrar.	Ensign of Infantry. Cornet of Cavalry.		

The officers of the Young Guard, of the Engineer Corps, and Cadet Corps, have one grade over those of the line, and the officers of the Old Guard have two, up to the rank of Colonel.

The 5th class of the Military Hierarchy, which comprised the grades of *Brigadier* and *Captain-Commander*, has been abolished. It is the same in the 11th class. It must also be observed, that, in the Imperial Guards, classes 7 and 8 (Lieutenant-Colonel and Major) do not exist; and the same is true of Major in the Corps of Engineers and Public Ways.

In the Military as well as the Naval Hierarchy, the grades from 14 to 7 confer personal nobility, and the superior grades, beginning with the 6th class, hereditary nobility; while in the Civil and other Hierarchies, personal nobility is acquired only from the 9th class (*Titular Councillor*), and hereditary nobility only from the 4th (*Actual Councillor of State*).

¹ In ancient times, the officer who assigned the lodgings to followers of the Court.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF RUSSIAN RANKS. (*Tchins.*)

RANKS.			TITLES.	HIERARCHY OF THE CHURCH.
Mines.	Learned Degrees.			
. . . . .	. . . . .	1	<i>Vuisokoprevoskhoditelstvo</i> . Noble Excellency.	MONASTIC PRIESTHOOD.
. . . . .	. . . . .	2		1. Metropolitan.
. . . . .	. . . . .	3	<i>Prevoskhoditelstvo</i> . Excellency.	2. Archbishop. <i>Title. Vuisokopreosvyashtchenstvo</i> . Most Eminent.
. . . . .	. . . . .	4		3. Bishop. <i>Title. Preosvyashtchenstvo</i> . Eminence.
Head Director of Mines.	. . . . .	5	<i>Vuisokorodie</i> . High born.	4. Archimandrite.
Director of Mines.	. . . . .	6	<i>Vuisokoblakorodie</i> . Most Honorable.	5. Abbot. <i>Title. Vuisokoprepodobie</i> . Right Reverend.
Chief Surveyor of Mines.	. . . . .	7		
Chief Overseer of Forges, Surveyor of Mines.	Doctor.	8		WHITE PRIESTHOOD.
<i>Markscheider</i> (Surveyor). Chief Assayer.	Magister (Master).	9		6. Archpriest. <i>Title. Vuisokoprepodobie</i> . Right Reverend.
Overseer of Forges.	Candidate (Bachelor).	10	<i>Blakorodie</i> . Well born.	7. Priest. <i>Title. Prepodobie</i> . Reverend.
. . . . .	. . . . .	11		
Assayer. Foreman.	Actual Student.	12		8. Archdeacon.
Foreman.	. . . . .	13		9. Deacon.

The 4th class of the Civil Hierarchy includes the titles *Attorney-General* and *Herald-in-Chief*; the 6th, the title *Councillor of War*; and the 13th, the title *Provincial Secretary*.

Among the posts at court of the first rank also belong *Chief Master of the Horse*, *Chief Master of the Hounds*, *Chief Master of Ceremonies*, *Director of the Imperial Theatre*; and, to the second rank, *Master of the Horse*, *Chief Carver*, *Master of Ceremonies*, as well as the posts of *Chamberlain* and *Gentleman of the Bed-chamber*.

The grades above indicated in the Hierarchy of Mines are preserved only for those who obtained them previous to 1834, that is to say, before the formation of the Corps of Mining Engineers; at present, the employees of the Department of Mines are called functionaries of such or such a class.

The titles *Vuisokoprevoskhoditelstvo*, *Prevoskhoditelstvo*, *Vuisokorodie*, etc., are only given to functionaries who possess no other. Russian Princes and Counts have the titles of *Siyatelstvo* (Excellency); and Princes of the Empire, that of *Svyetlost* (Serene Highness).

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